

KIRKMAN • OTTLEY • CRABTREE

INVINCIBLE™



HEAD OF THE CLASS

Introduction by Mark Waid

image COMICS PRESENTS

INVINCIBLE

HEAD OF THE CLASS



CREATED BY
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& CORY WALKER**

image

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THE BEFORE TIME

by Mark Waid

Q: What did the first homo sapiens say to the last cro-magnon?

A: "Hey, will you write an introduction to my book?"

Hi, I'm Mark Waid, former comics superstar. You may remember me from such award-winning series as X-O MANOWAR, THE KINGDOM, and CRUX, a.k.a. The Watchmen of CrossGen Comics. Yes, back in the BeforeTime, I was everywhere. I had my choice of plum assignments, and the riches and fame that come with being an internationally famous comic book author were mine for the taking. Life was a fairy-tale ride of royalty checks and Cuervo Gold margaritas fetched by comely comicon volunteers at the snap of the fingers. "So how," you would naturally ask aloud if you somehow thought you were actually looking at me and not page five of a trade paperback, "how is it, Mark--I'm sorry, I mean, 'how is it, Mr. Waid'--how is it that someone of your legendary stature ends up penning an introductory text piece for a collection such as this?

"Is it because you find Robert Kirkman's writing fresh and his character voices clever without being precious and unique without being inaccessible?

"Is it because, in the endless sea of repetition that is mainstream superhero comics, you're delighted to find yourself genuinely surprised each and every month by the twists and turns in INVINCIBLE?

"Is it--I'm sorry, of course, it clearly states right here in the fine print that I'm not allowed to make direct eye contact with you, my apologies--is it because you admire the skill with which Kirkman and his collaborators cram so much entertainment into each and every issue? Is that why you agreed to write an introduction, Mr. Waid?"

No.

I said I'd do this because it's the only assignment Kirkman's not already taken.

I admit, I shared nothing but thoughts of encouragement and mentorly congratulations over the past couple of years when our young Mr. Kirkman, a poor mountaineer who barely kept his family fed, went from writing one or two regular series to three, then four. Even at five, six, and seven, I gave him my blessings, never realizing what was inevitably to befall me until it was far too late.

Gradually, Kirkman was everywhere. EVERYWHERE. Suddenly, Judd Winick started having to hunt for new assignments, then Mark Millar, as--one by one--Kirkman's little hillbilly laptop, not sated by producing the plots and dialogue for every Image Comic out there, devoured half the gigs available at Marvel, then the other half. Geoff Johns found himself reduced to writing greeting cards once Robert set his sights on DC ("I can write DOOM PATROL on Thursdays between five and six," he said, but then, who can't?), and Gail Simone was last seen scratching out "Will banter wittily for food" signs alongside Greg Rucka.

And now I sit here in the flickering candlelight of hopelessness, desperate to pick up the pocket change someone's going to--GET AWAY FROM ME, BENDIS, YOU &%!\$%#, FIND YOUR OWN ^&#!%# WORK!--someone's going to hand me in exchange for these five hundred words. It's the only assignment Kirkman's left any of us. It's all there is to do, and I will protect it as the only lifeline remaining to me, Mark Waid, former comics superstar. It's all I have--

--oh, Jesus. I think I heard him.

I did. That's HIM.

He's coming.

He's CO--

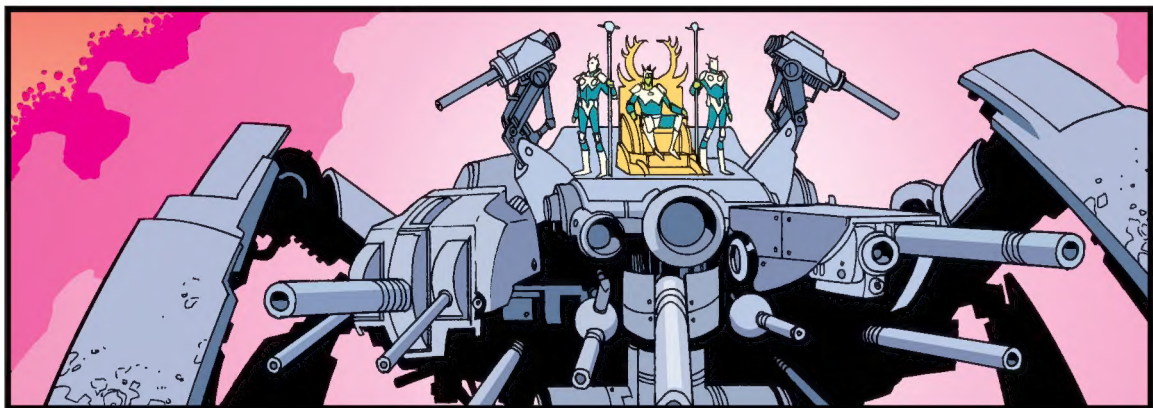
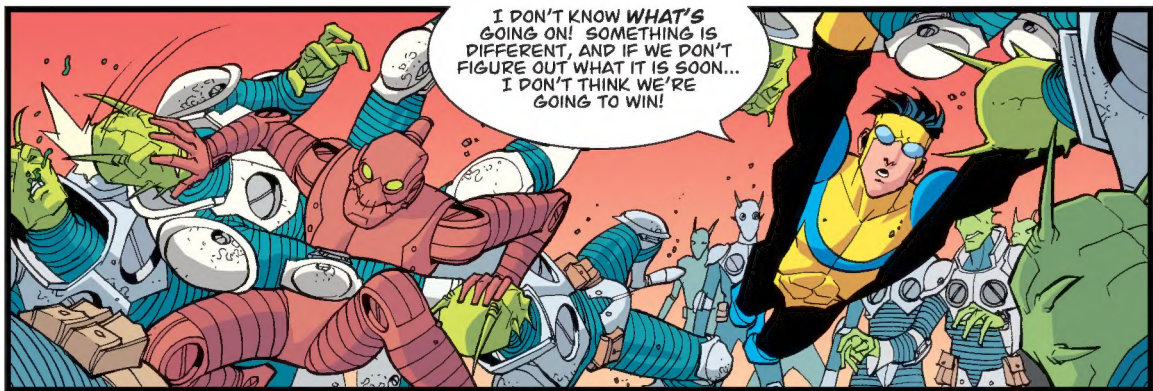
CHAPTER ONE





INVINCIBLE!
YOU SAID WHEN
YOU FOUGHT THESE
THINGS BEFORE THEY
DIDN'T LAST MORE
THAN AN HOUR UNTIL
THEIR RAPID AGING
CAUSED THEM TO
RETREAT!

WE HAVE
BEEN AT THIS
NEARLY TWO HOURS
AND THEIR NUMBERS
ONLY INCREASE! I
FEAR WE CANNOT
HOLD OUT MUCH
LONGER!

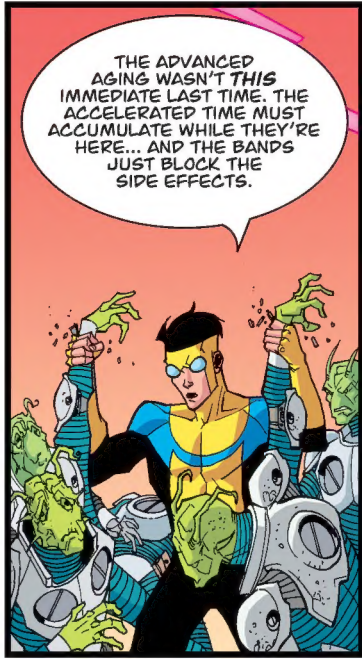


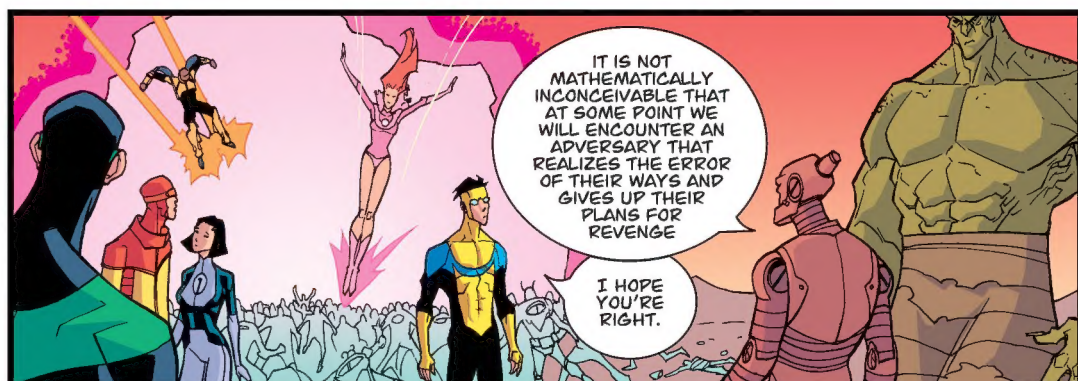
YOU ARE THE SON, *HALF* OF THE DUO KNOWN AS THE *SCOURGE* OF THE *FLAXAN EMPIRE*! THE FATHER WAS CAPTURED BY US MANY AGES AGO. THE DESTRUCTION HE CAUSED TO OUR HOME WORLD HAS TAKEN US *CENTURIES* TO REPAIR.

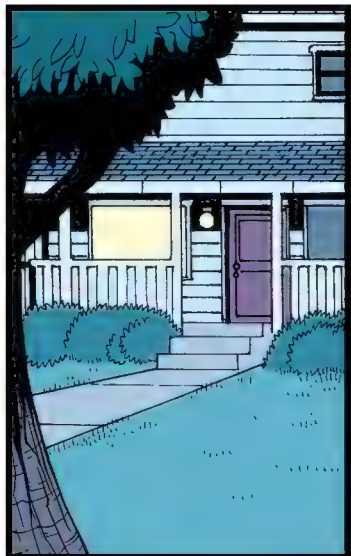
CENTURIES WE SPENT PLOTTING--SCHEMING--PREPARING. WE USED RECORDINGS OF HIS DIALOGUE TO LEARN YOUR LANGUAGE... WE USED MATERIAL FROM HIS CLOTHING TO STUDY THE PROPERTIES OF THIS DIMENSION.

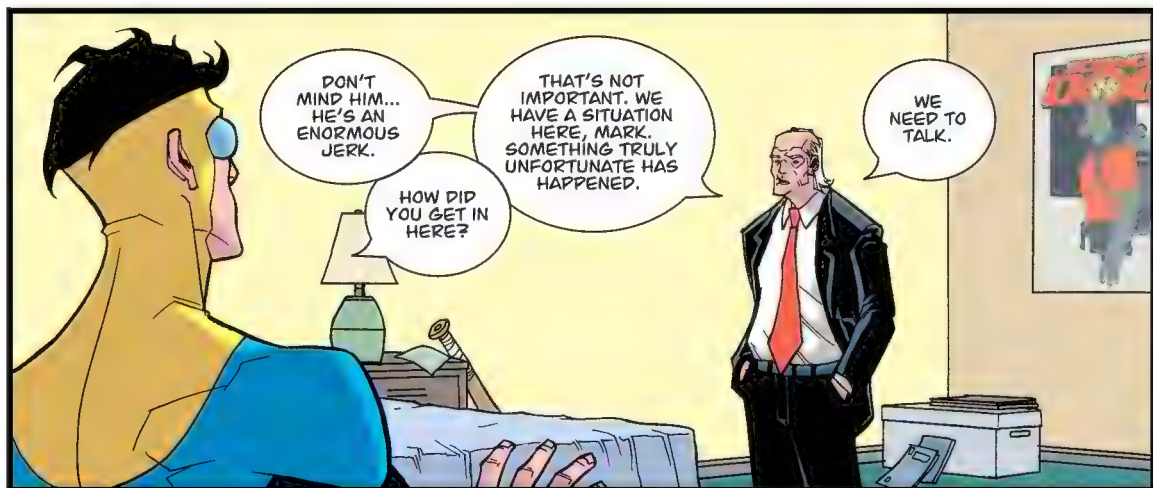
OVER TIME--WE LEARNED TO COUNTERACT THE SIDE EFFECTS OF BEING IN YOUR DIMENSION. AND NOW, WITH OUR *CHRONO-BANDS*... WE'LL FINALLY HAVE OUR REVENGE!











DON'T MIND HIM... HE'S AN ENORMOUS JERK.

THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT. WE HAVE A SITUATION HERE, MARK. SOMETHING TRULY UNFORTUNATE HAS HAPPENED.

WE NEED TO TALK.

HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?



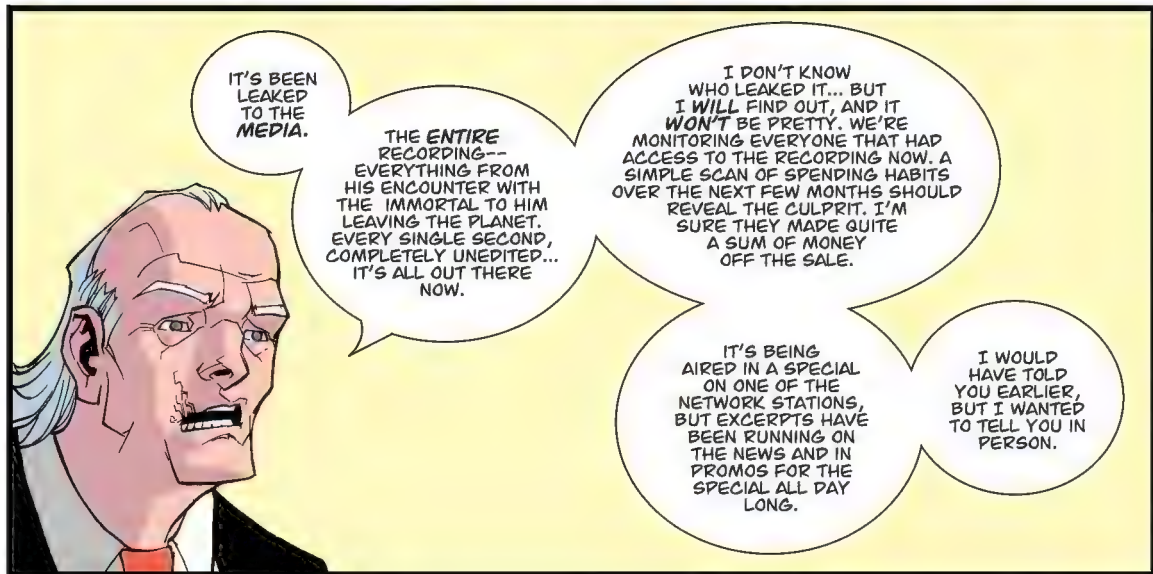
WHAT'S GOING ON?

YOUR FATHER... THE EARPIECE HE HAD THAT LET HIM COMMUNICATE WITH ME. IT WORKED BOTH WAYS, WE WERE ABLE TO RECORD EVERYTHING HE SAID TO YOU BEFORE HE LEFT THE PLANET.



YEAH?

YOU ALREADY TOLD ME THAT... THAT'S HOW YOU KNEW I TRIED TO FIGHT HIM.



IT'S BEEN LEAKED TO THE MEDIA.

THE ENTIRE RECORDING-- EVERYTHING FROM HIS ENCOUNTER WITH THE IMMORTAL TO HIM LEAVING THE PLANET. EVERY SINGLE SECOND, COMPLETELY UNEDITED... IT'S ALL OUT THERE NOW.

I DON'T KNOW WHO LEAKED IT... BUT I WILL FIND OUT, AND IT WON'T BE PRETTY. WE'RE MONITORING EVERYONE THAT HAD ACCESS TO THE RECORDING NOW. A SIMPLE SCAN OF SPENDING HABITS OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS SHOULD REVEAL THE CULPRIT. I'M SURE THEY MADE QUITE A SUM OF MONEY OFF THE SALE.

IT'S BEING AIRED IN A SPECIAL ON ONE OF THE NETWORK STATIONS, BUT EXCERPTS HAVE BEEN RUNNING ON THE NEWS AND IN PROMOS FOR THE SPECIAL ALL DAY LONG.

I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU EARLIER, BUT I WANTED TO TELL YOU IN PERSON.



BUT--THE THINGS HE SAID... THE THINGS HE TALKED ABOUT... THAT WOULD MEAN--

YOUR IDENTITY IS NOT COMPROMISED. HE NEVER REFERRED TO YOU AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN "SON" OR "MARK." IT WAS ALREADY PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE THAT YOU WERE HIS SON. HE DIDN'T REFER TO YOUR MOTHER BY NAME AT ANY TIME. HE MADE NO REFERENCE TO HIS NAME, HIS JOB, ANY LOCATIONS... NOTHING WAS SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED.



NEITHER YOU NOR YOUR FATHER HAVE EVER BEEN ASSOCIATED WITH ANY SPECIFIC AREA OF THE COUNTRY. YOU HAVE NO METROPOLIS. ASIDE FROM YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH YOUR PHYSICS TEACHER, THERE'S NOTHING TO TIE YOU WITH THIS REGION. FOR THE MOST PART, YOU'VE BOTH BEEN ACTIVE IN ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD. IT'S ONLY SPECULATED THAT YOU ARE AMERICAN.



SO YOU COULD BE ANY NUMBER OF **THOUSANDS** OF "MARKS" ON THIS EARTH.



MY MAIN CONCERN IS YOUR MOTHER. THE INTIMATE DETAILS OF YOUR DISCUSSION WITH YOUR FATHER NEARLY PUT HER INTO SHOCK BEFORE. SHE DIDN'T SPEAK FOR NEARLY TWO WEEKS, ALMOST THE ENTIRE TIME YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS.

THESE ARE ALL THINGS SHE'S HEARD BEFORE BUT I DON'T KNOW THAT SHE'S **READY** TO HEAR IT AGAIN. IF THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO, PLEASE... DON'T HESITATE TO LET ME KNOW.

THANKS, CECIL. I REALLY APPRECIATE THIS.

AND DON'T WORRY... WE'LL GET THE GUY RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS LEAK. IT **WON'T** HAPPEN AGAIN.

AND WITH THAT I MUST MAKE MY EXIT. ONE TO TELEPORT, STAND BY.



TELEPORT? WE CAN DO THAT?!



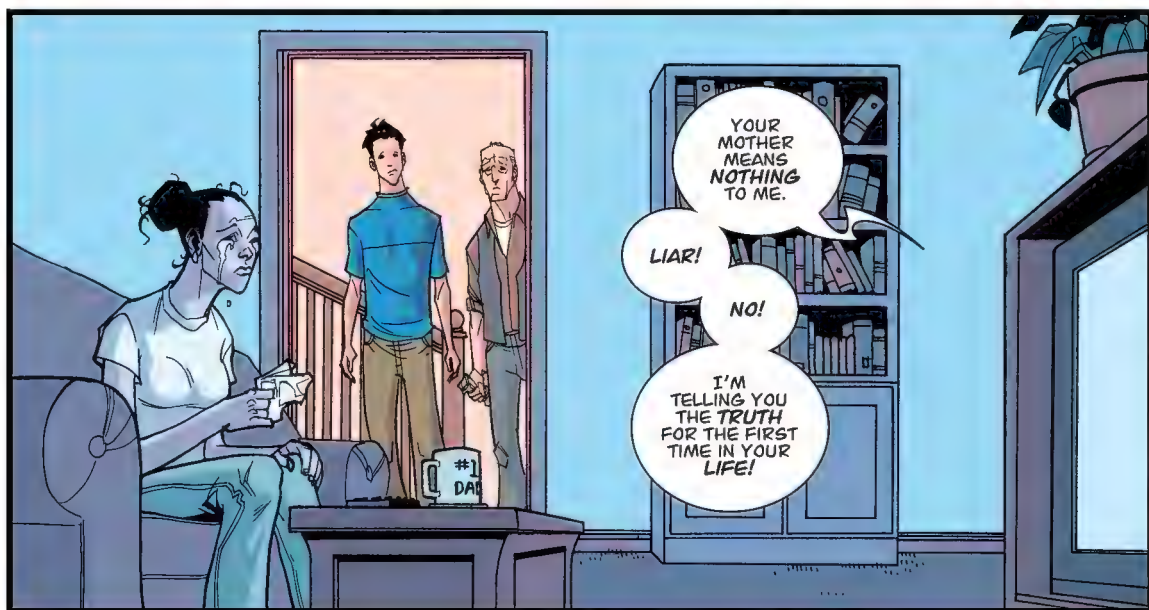
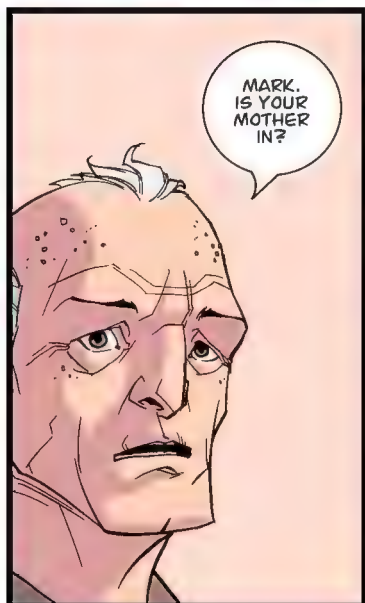
WE **JUST** GOT IT. IT COSTS TAXPAYERS FIVE MILLION DOLLARS EVERY TIME WE USE IT BUT I JUST HAD TO TRY IT.

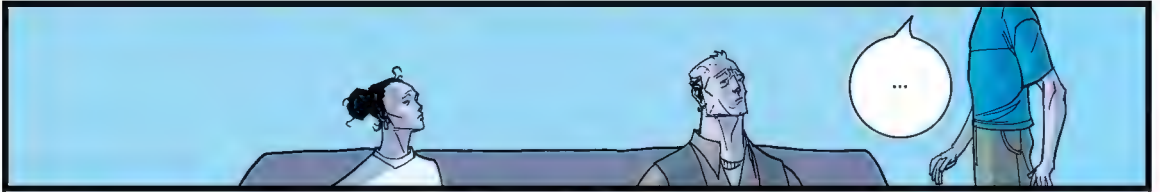
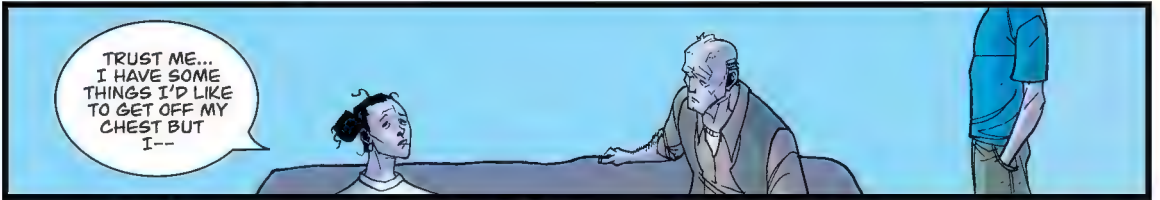
WE'RE READY FOR YOU.



ENGAGE.

WOW.









OKAY FELLAS...
THIS FIGHT IS OVER.
LET'S TAKE IT TO THE
PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE.
I MEAN IT... THIS STOPS
HERE, NOW. YOU'RE
ALL IN ENOUGH
TROUBLE AS
IT IS.

MISTER
KEENE!



THEY
STARTED
IT.



I DON'T CARE WHO
STARTED IT, DEREK. THIS
ISN'T THE WAY YOU REACT
TO INSTIGATION. YOU'RE
ALL IN TROUBLE... I
WANT YOU ALL IN MY
OFFICE NOW.



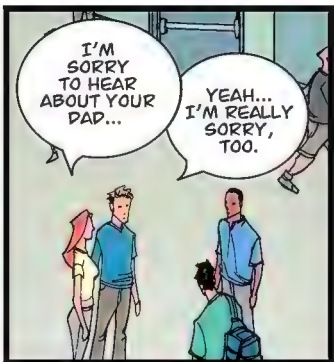
MARK, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU
WERE BACK ALREADY. IF YOU
COULD COME TO MY OFFICE
IN A FEW MINUTES... I
SHOULD BE DONE WITH
THESE BOYS
SHORTLY.

I'D LIKE
TO TALK TO
YOU.

OKAY.



MARK! MAN...
YOU'RE BACK. IT'S
SO GOOD TO
SEE YOU.



I'M
SORRY
TO HEAR
ABOUT YOUR
DAD...

YEAH...
I'M REALLY
SORRY,
TOO.

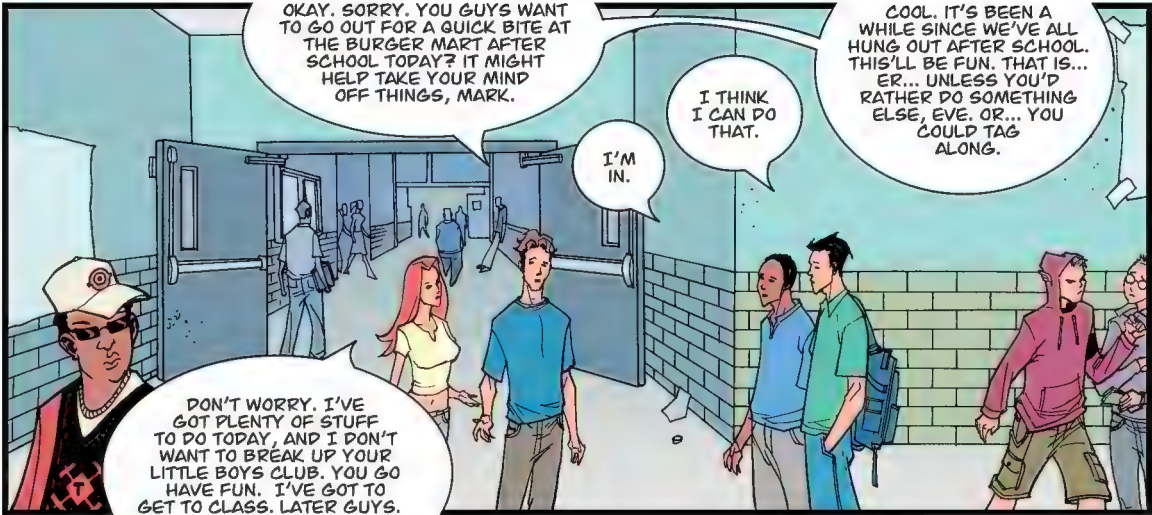


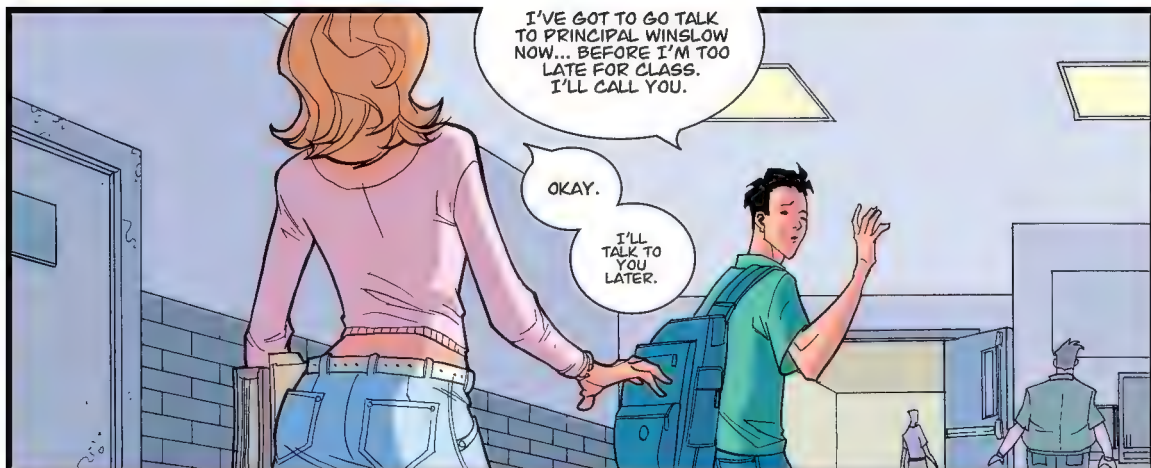
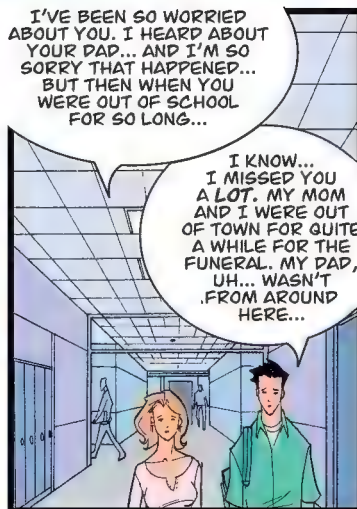
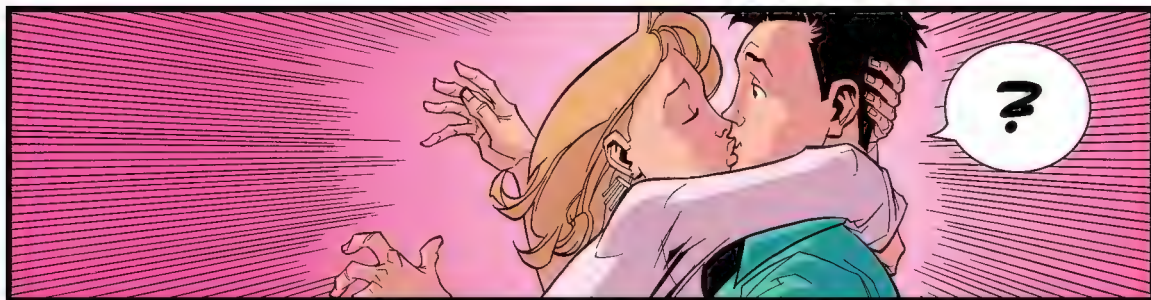
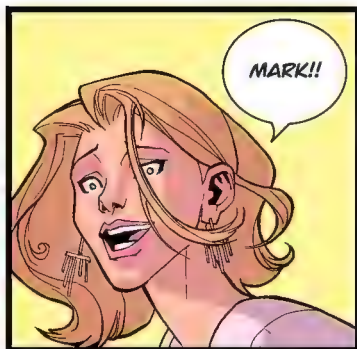
ME
TOO.

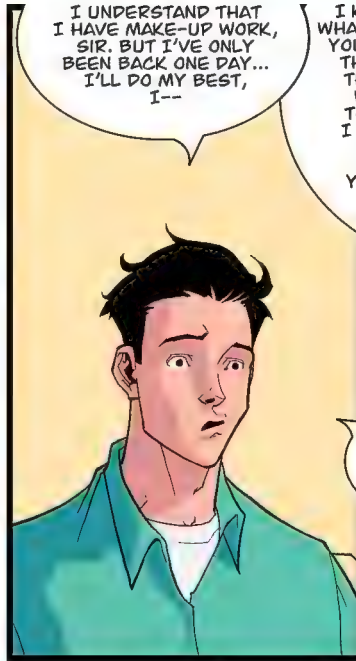
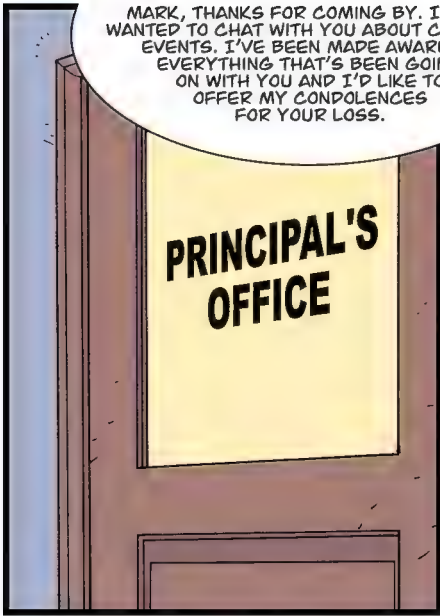


SO
AM I...

CAN WE,
UH... DROP
THIS FOR
NOW?

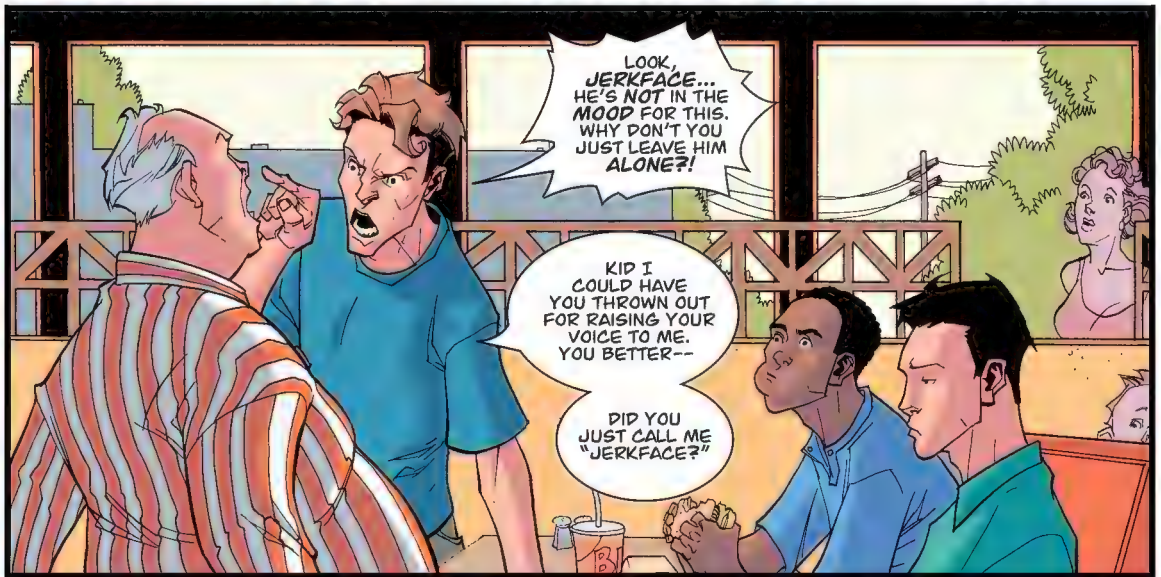


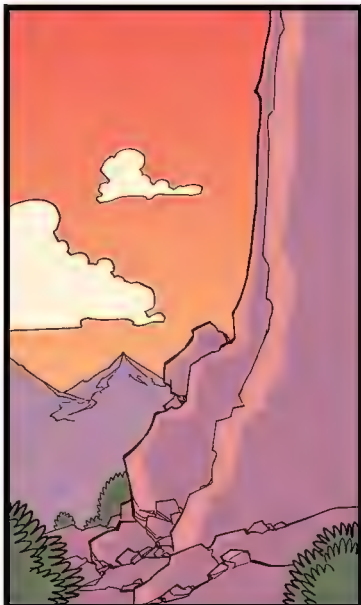












YOU DID WELL IN SAUDI ARABIA TODAY. THE FLAXANS-- I BELIEVE THEY WERE CALLED--DIDN'T CAUSE MUCH DAMAGE... AND IT WASN'T TOO LONG AN INCIDENT. WE'RE NOT IMPRESSED, BUT YOUR TEAM IS IMPROVING.

I'M GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY BUT I DO NOT AGREE WITH YOUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF MY TEAM. I THINK WE ARE MORE THAN CAPABLE--

NO. YOUR RESPONSE TIME IS NEARLY HALF OF WHAT THE ORIGINAL TEAM BOASTED. WE DIDN'T EXPECT YOU TO COMPLETELY FILL THEIR SHOES BUT WE DID NOT EXPECT YOU TO FALL SO SHORT.



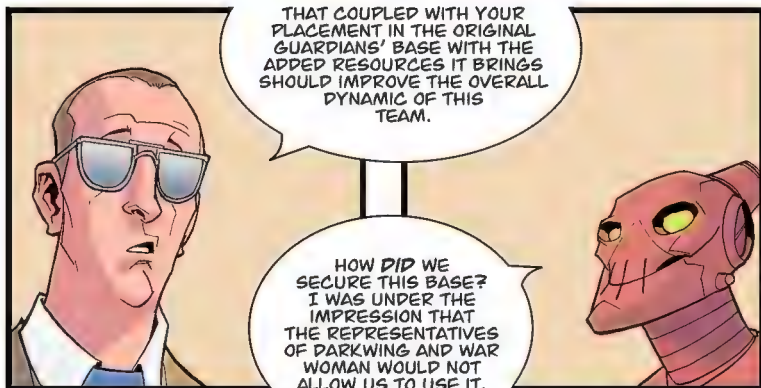
WHICH IS WHY WE'RE EXPANDING THE TEAM.

THIS IS BULLETPROOF, HE WAS AT THE AUDITIONS YOU HELD EARLIER BUT YOU FELT HE DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT. HE'S AS FAST AS THE REP RUSH AND ALMOST AS INVULNERABLE AS... ER... OMNI-MAN.

BUT NOT NEARLY AS EVIL.

HE CAN ALSO FLY... SOMETHING YOUR TEAM SORELY NEEDS. I THINK HE'LL MAKE A FINE ADDITION.

"FINE" BEING THE OPERATIVE WORD!



THAT COUPLED WITH YOUR PLACEMENT IN THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS' BASE WITH THE ADDED RESOURCES IT BRINGS SHOULD IMPROVE THE OVERALL DYNAMIC OF THIS TEAM.

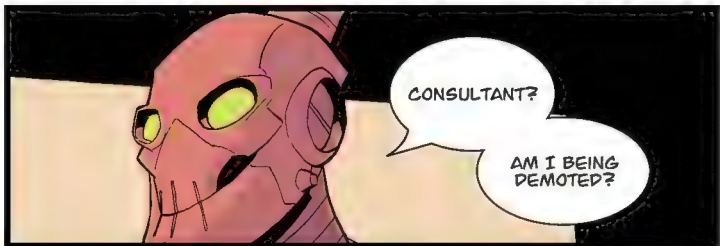
HOW DID WE SECURE THIS BASE? I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT THE REPRESENTATIVES OF DARKWING AND WAR WOMAN WOULD NOT ALLOW US TO USE IT.



FOR THAT YOU CAN THANK YOUR NEW CONSULTANT.



HE HAD A SMALL INVOLVEMENT WITH THE PREVIOUS OWNERS, AND HE CAN BE VERY PERSUASIVE.



CONSULTANT?

AM I BEING DEMOTED?



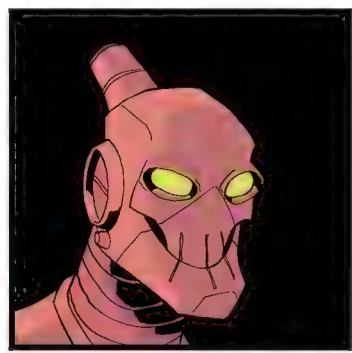
NOT YET... BUT THE DAY'S STILL YOUNG.

HE'S BEING BROUGHT IN AS A CONSULTANT. YOU CAN'T BOSS HIM AROUND AND HE CAN'T BOSS YOU AROUND. YOU ARE EQUALS, BUT YOU ARE IN CHARGE OF THE TEAM. HE'S JUST HERE TO OFFER ADVICE, AND ASSIST YOU IN EVERY WAY HE CAN. YOU CAN TAKE HIS ADVICE OR IGNORE IT... BUT I SUGGEST YOU TAKE IT.



I'LL LEAVE YOU GIRLS TO GET ACQUAINTED.

C'MON, DONALD.



YOU WANT ME TO GIVE YOU A LIFT BACK?

NO WAY. ARE YOU KIDDING ME?

ONE TO TELEPORT.

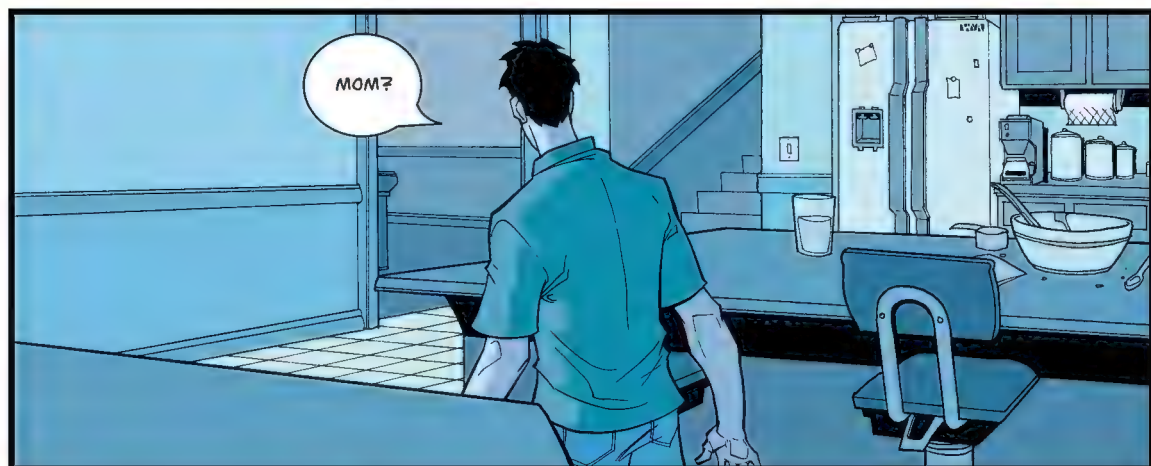
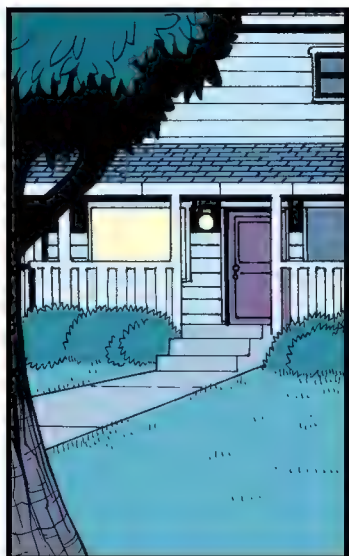
BUT SIR, WE SHOULD ONLY USE THE TELEPORTER IN CASES OF EXTREME EMERGENCY. YOU REALIZE THE COST DON'T YOU? YOU'VE ALREADY USED IT SIX TIMES THIS WEEK.



I KNOW, DONALD. I KNOW.



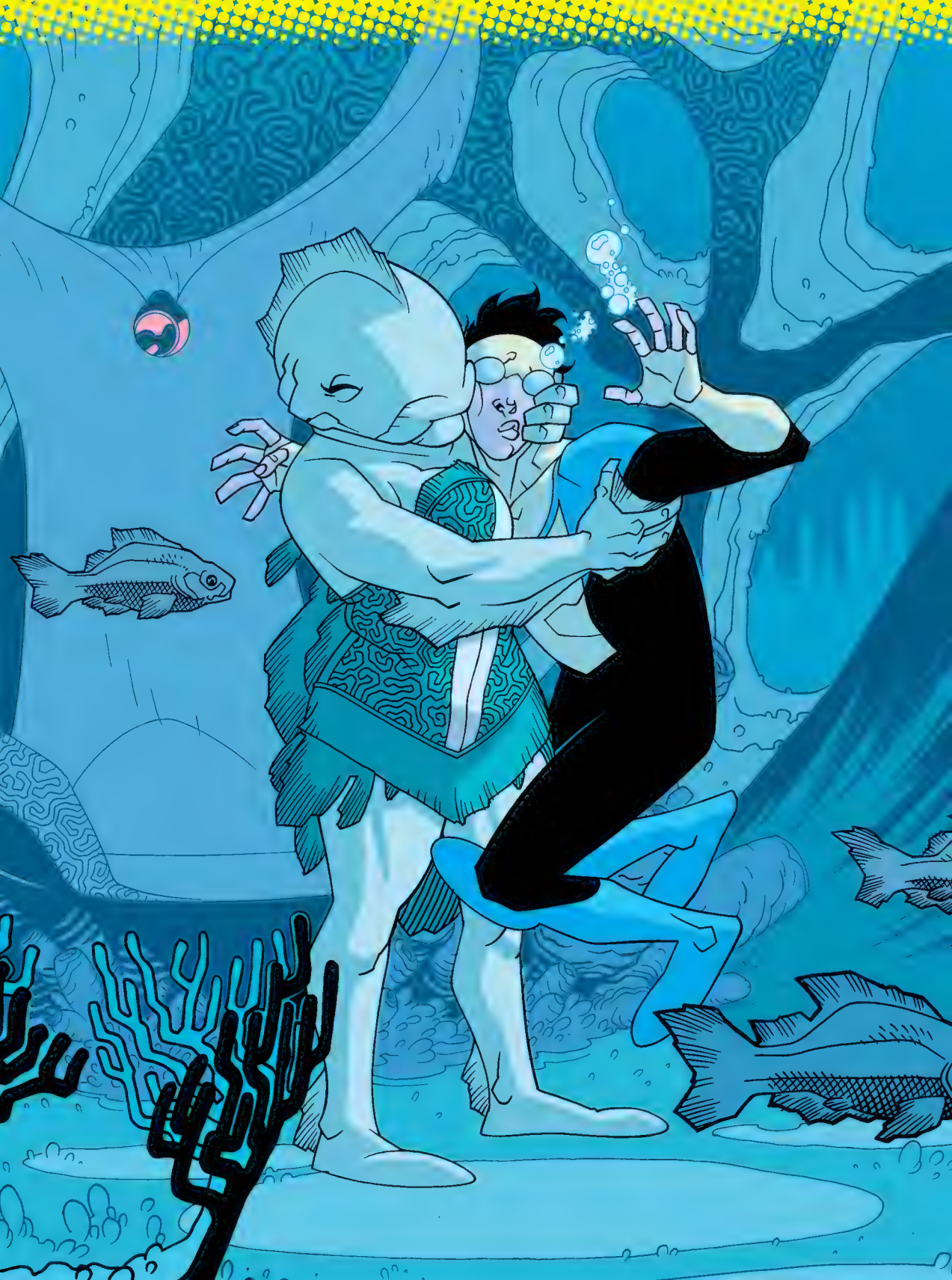
I THINK I'M ADDICTED.







CHAPTER TWO





WELL, I'M
OUT OF HERE.
I'LL SEE YOU
LATER,
ROBOT.

ACTUALLY...
DO YOU HAVE A
MINUTE? I NEED
TO TALK TO
YOU.



SURE, BOSS.
I'VE GOT A LITTLE
TIME. WHAT'S
UP?

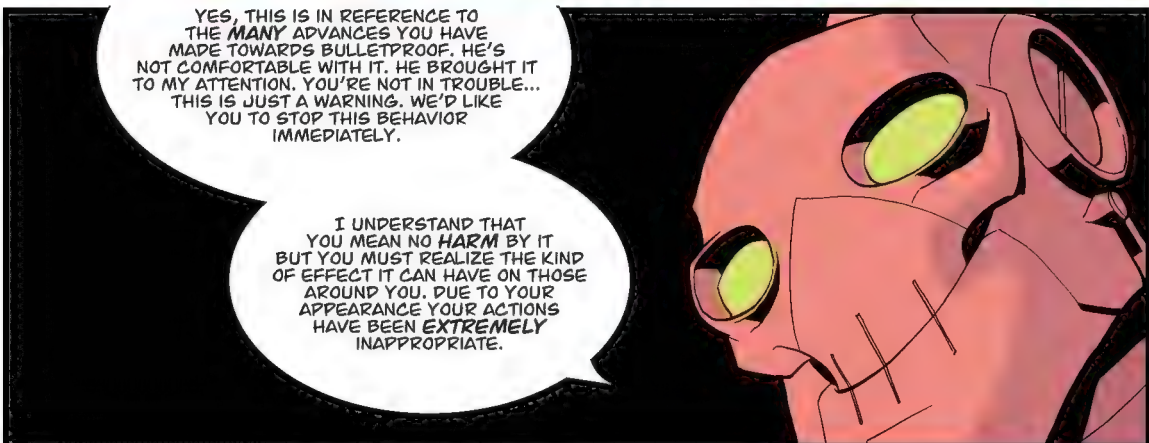


WE NEED TO DISCUSS
YOUR BEHAVIOR. YOU ARE
AN **EXCELLENT** MEMBER
OF OUR TEAM. I DON'T WANT
YOU TO THINK THIS IS ABOUT
YOUR PERFORMANCE,
BECAUSE IT HAS **NOTHING**
TO DO WITH IT. YOU ARE A
VERY PRODUCTIVE AND
VALUED MEMBER OF THE
GUARDIANS OF THE
GLOBE.

THE
PROBLEM I
HAVE WITH YOU
IS YOUR CONDUCT
DURING OUR
DOWNTIMES.



IS THIS
ABOUT THAT
BULLETPROOF
JERK?



YES, THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO
THE **MANY** ADVANCES YOU HAVE
MADE TOWARDS BULLETPROOF. HE'S
NOT COMFORTABLE WITH IT. HE BROUGHT IT
TO MY ATTENTION. YOU'RE NOT IN TROUBLE...
THIS IS JUST A WARNING. WE'D LIKE
YOU TO STOP THIS BEHAVIOR
IMMEDIATELY.

I UNDERSTAND THAT
YOU MEAN NO **HARM** BY IT
BUT YOU MUST REALIZE THE KIND
OF EFFECT IT CAN HAVE ON THOSE
AROUND YOU. DUE TO YOUR
APPEARANCE YOUR ACTIONS
HAVE BEEN **EXTREMELY**
INAPPROPRIATE.

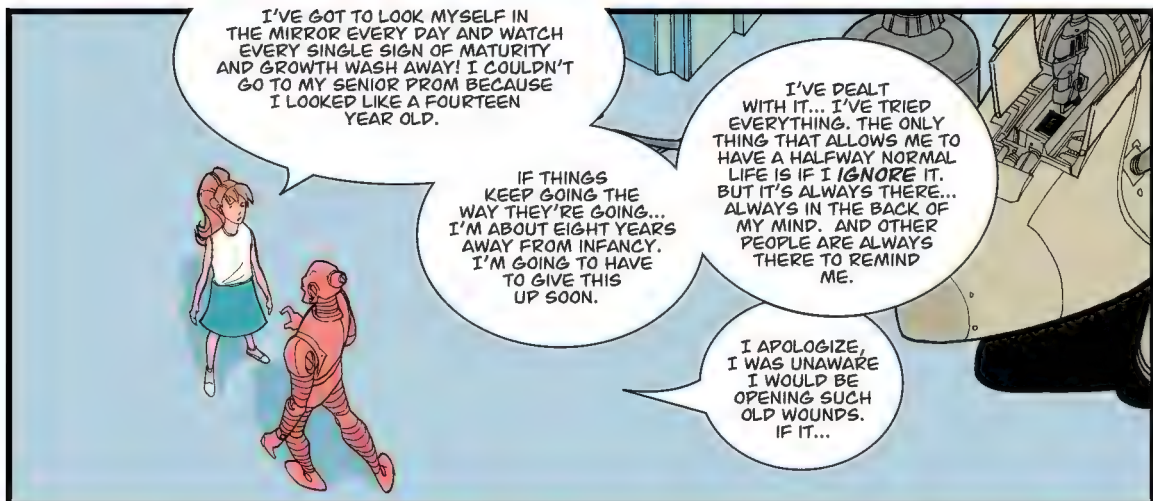
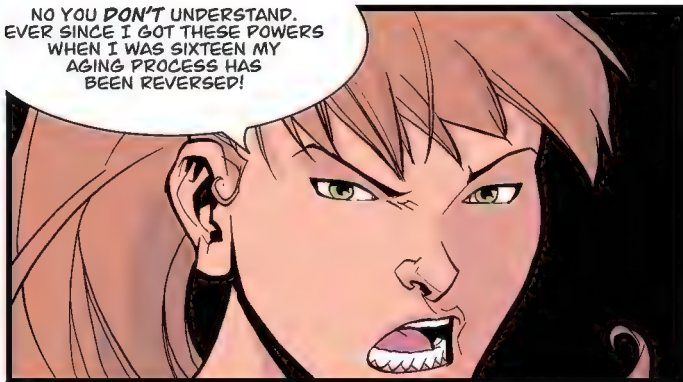


I'M A TWENTY-NINE YEAR OLD WOMAN, ROBOT! I HAVE FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS AND URGES JUST LIKE ANY NORMAL ADULT. MY APPEARANCE IS AN UNFORTUNATE SIDE EFFECT OF MY SUPERPOWER BUT I CAN'T LET IT CRIPPLE ME FOR LIFE.



I UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT--

NO YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. EVER SINCE I GOT THESE POWERS WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN MY AGING PROCESS HAS BEEN REVERSED!



I'VE GOT TO LOOK MYSELF IN THE MIRROR EVERY DAY AND WATCH EVERY SINGLE SIGN OF MATURITY AND GROWTH WASH AWAY! I COULDN'T GO TO MY SENIOR PROM BECAUSE I LOOKED LIKE A FOURTEEN YEAR OLD.

IF THINGS KEEP GOING THE WAY THEY'RE GOING... I'M ABOUT EIGHT YEARS AWAY FROM INFANCY. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO GIVE THIS UP SOON.

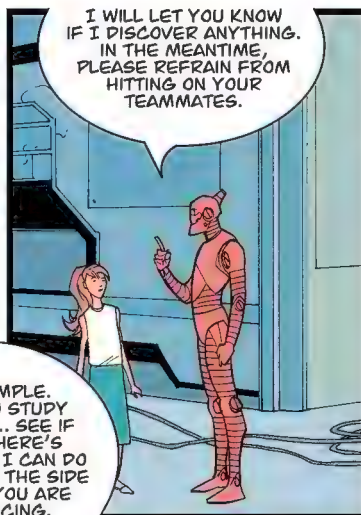
I'VE DEALT WITH IT... I'VE TRIED EVERYTHING. THE ONLY THING THAT ALLOWS ME TO HAVE A HALFWAY NORMAL LIFE IS IF I IGNORE IT. BUT IT'S ALWAYS THERE... ALWAYS IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. AND OTHER PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS THERE TO REMIND ME.

I APOLOGIZE, I WAS UNAWARE I WOULD BE OPENING SUCH OLD WOUNDS. IF IT...

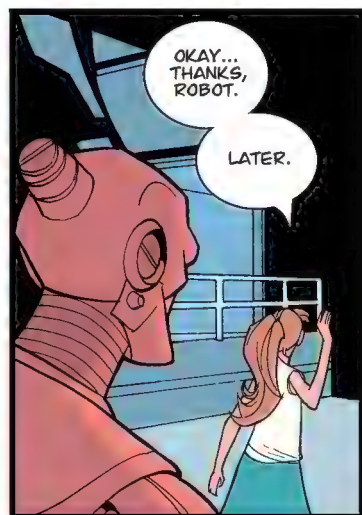


OW! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

SKIN SAMPLE. I WANT TO STUDY YOUR DNA... SEE IF MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN DO TO COUNTER THE SIDE EFFECTS YOU ARE EXPERIENCING.

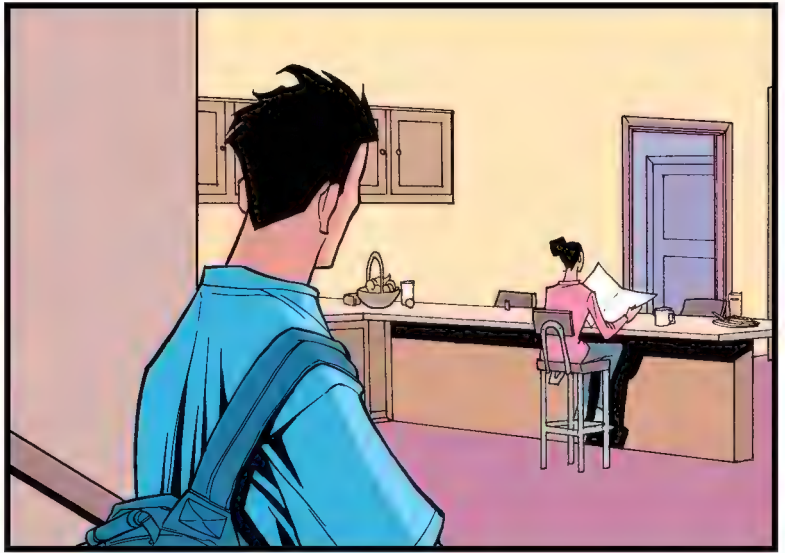
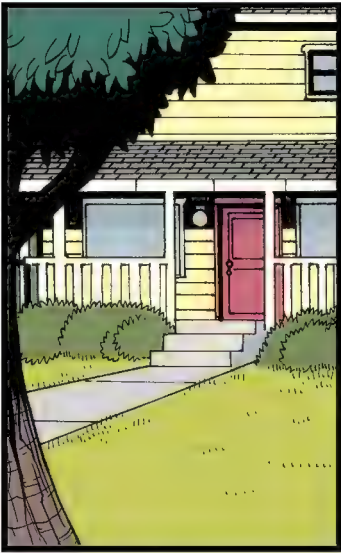


I WILL LET YOU KNOW IF I DISCOVER ANYTHING. IN THE MEANTIME, PLEASE REFRAIN FROM HITTING ON YOUR TEAMMATES.

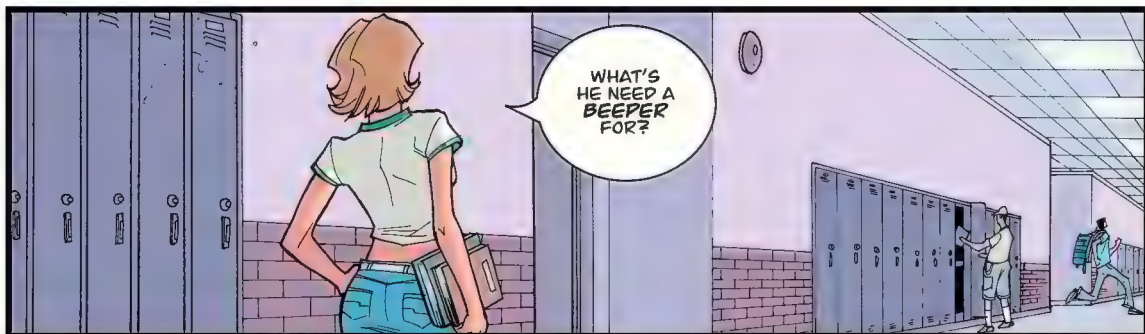
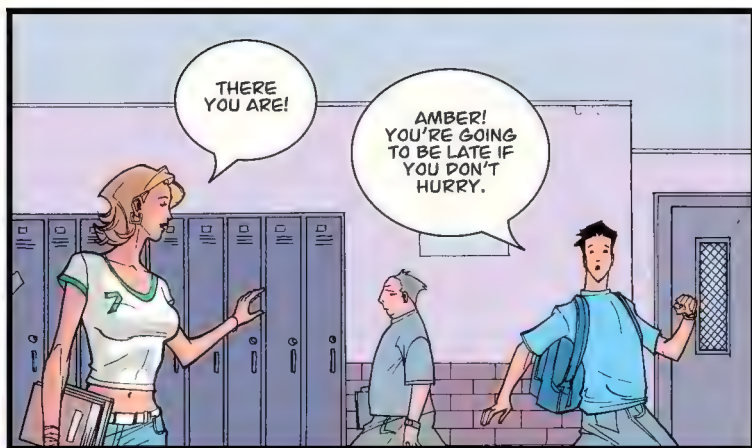


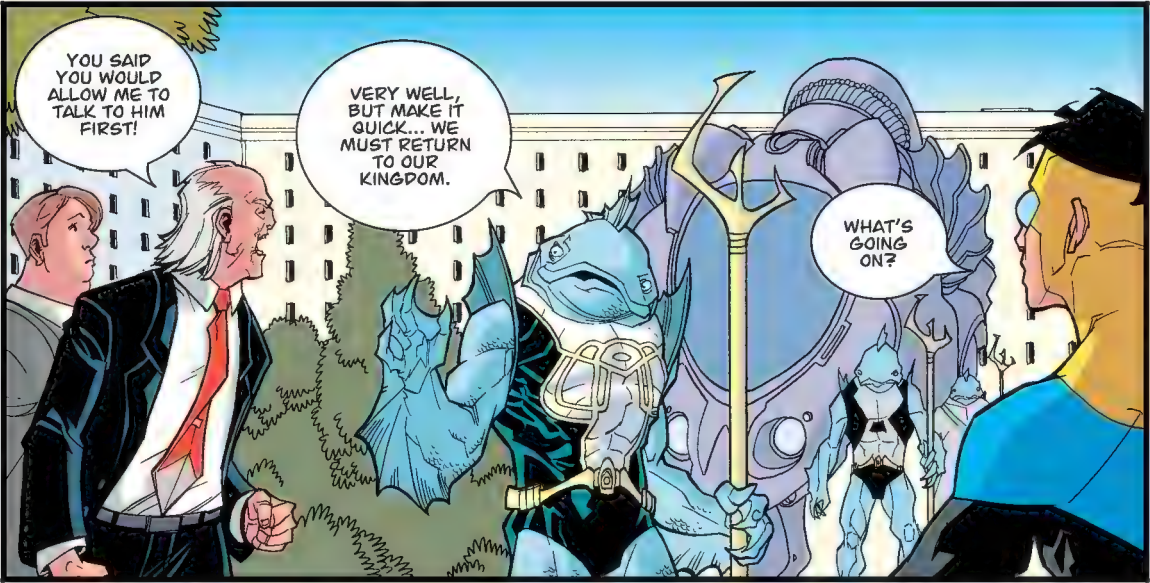
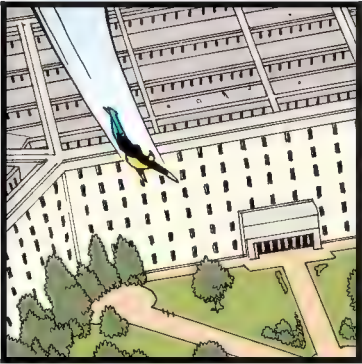
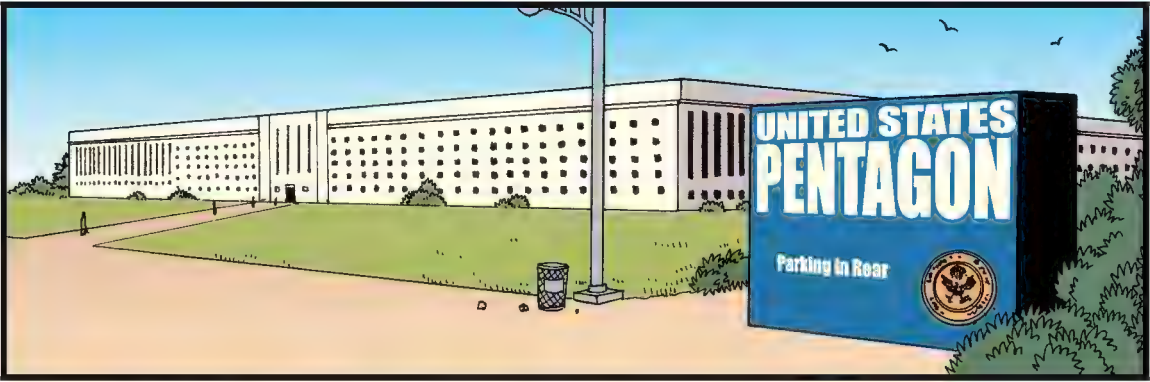
OKAY... THANKS, ROBOT.

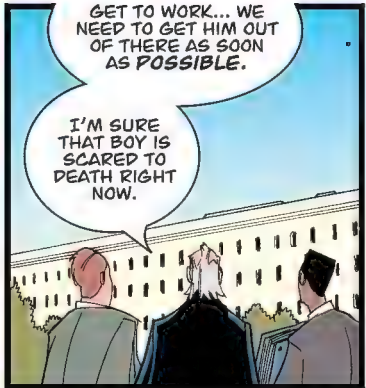
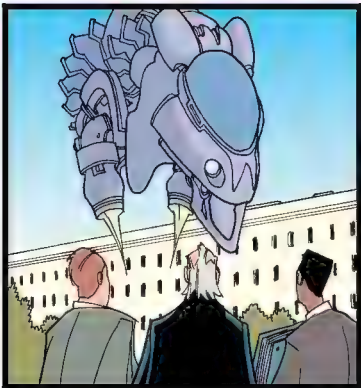
LATER.







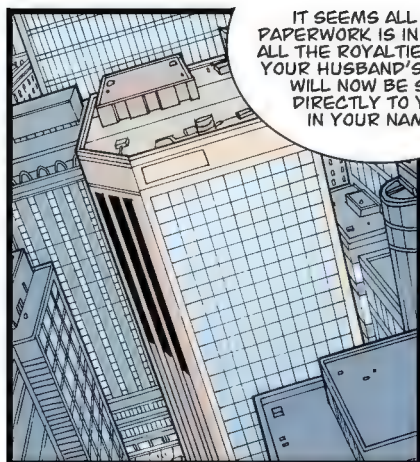




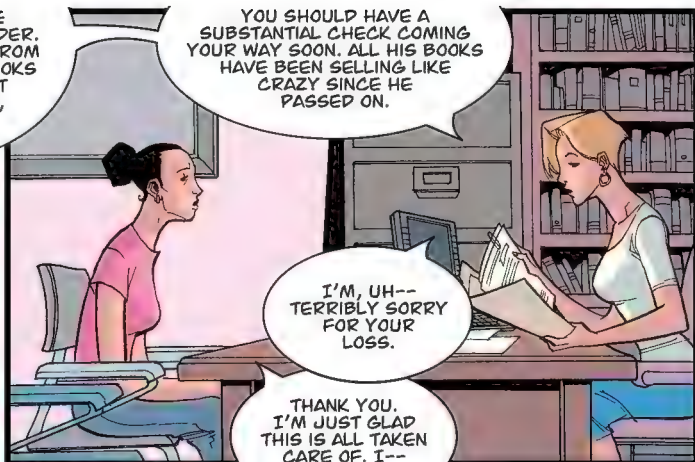


wow.

THIS
IS SO
COOL.



IT SEEMS ALL THE PAPERWORK IS IN ORDER. ALL THE ROYALTIES FROM YOUR HUSBAND'S BOOKS WILL NOW BE SENT DIRECTLY TO YOU, IN YOUR NAME.



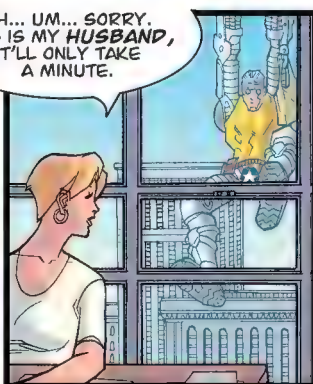
YOU SHOULD HAVE A SUBSTANTIAL CHECK COMING YOUR WAY SOON. ALL HIS BOOKS HAVE BEEN SELLING LIKE CRAZY SINCE HE PASSED ON.

I'M, UH-- TERRIBLY SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS.

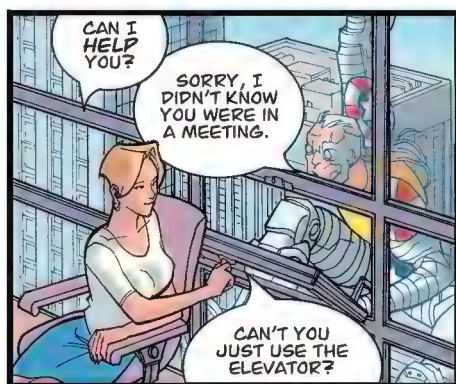
THANK YOU. I'M JUST GLAD THIS IS ALL TAKEN CARE OF. I--



UM... THERE'S A ROBOT--



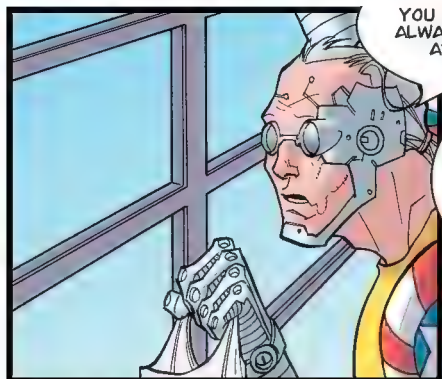
OH... UM... SORRY. THIS IS MY HUSBAND, IT'LL ONLY TAKE A MINUTE.



CAN I HELP YOU?

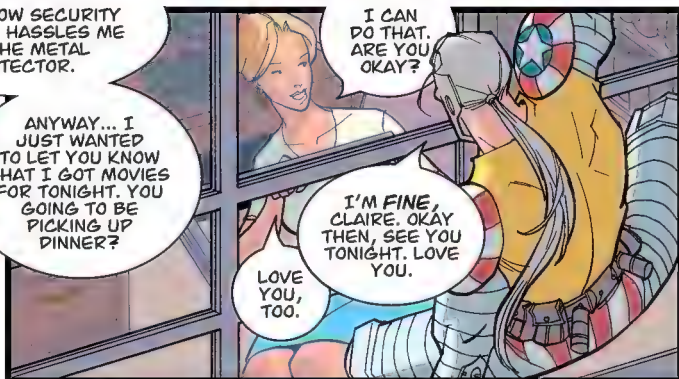
SORRY, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN A MEETING.

CAN'T YOU JUST USE THE ELEVATOR?



YOU KNOW SECURITY ALWAYS HASSLES ME AT THE METAL DETECTOR.

ANYWAY... I JUST WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I GOT MOVIES FOR TONIGHT. YOU GOING TO BE PICKING UP DINNER?



I CAN DO THAT. ARE YOU OKAY?

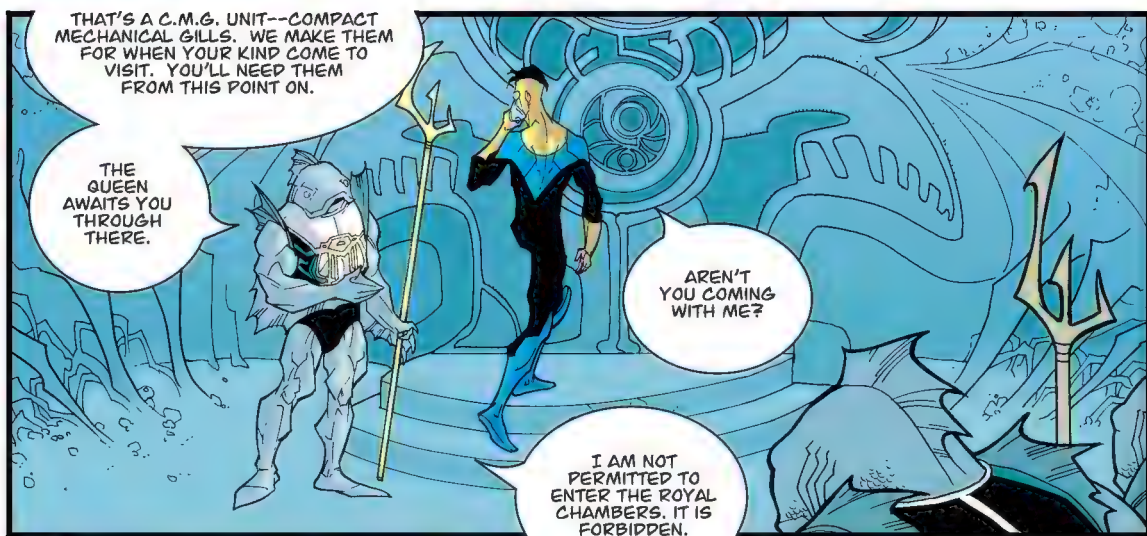
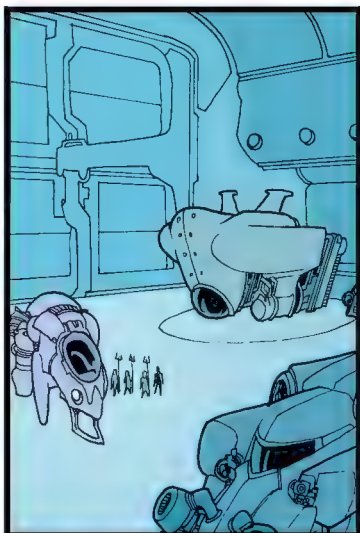
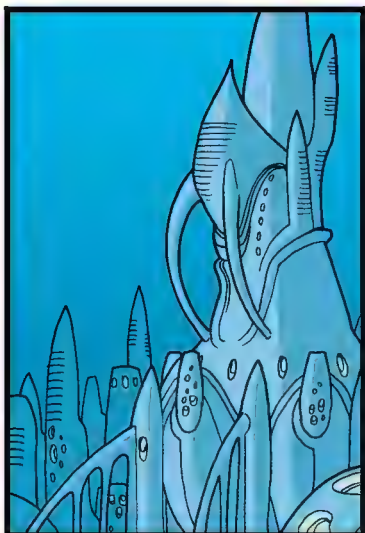
I'M FINE, CLAIRE. OKAY THEN, SEE YOU TONIGHT. LOVE YOU.

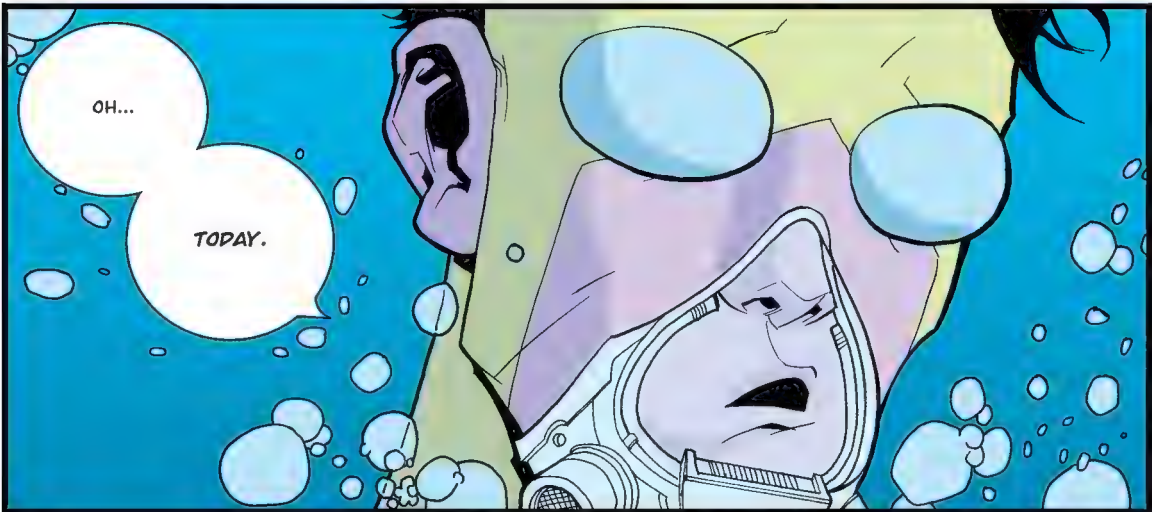
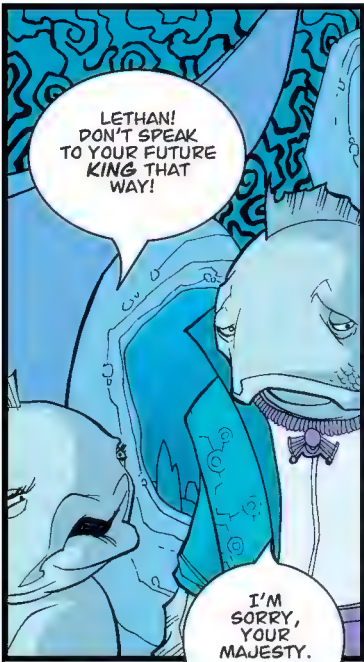
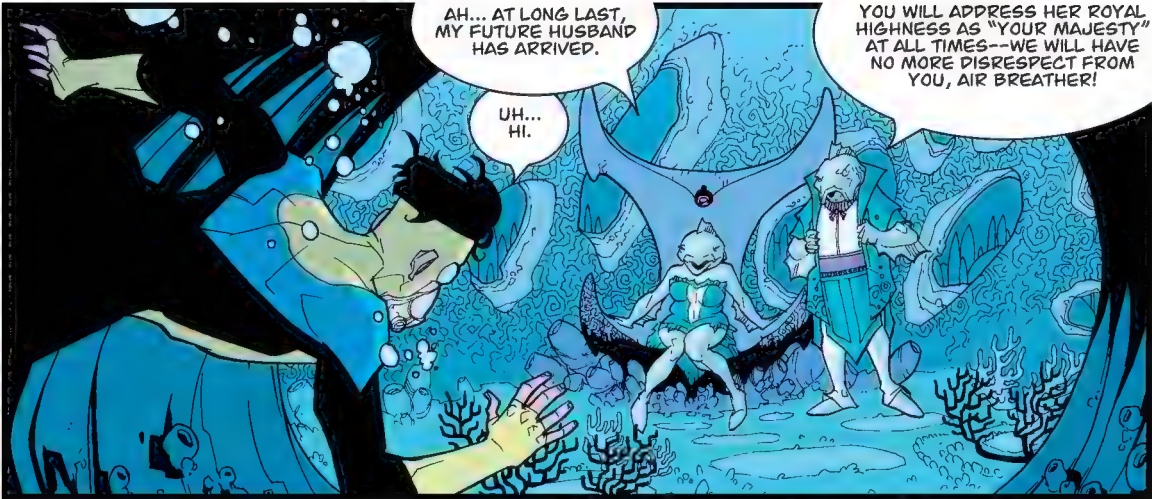
LOVE YOU, TOO.

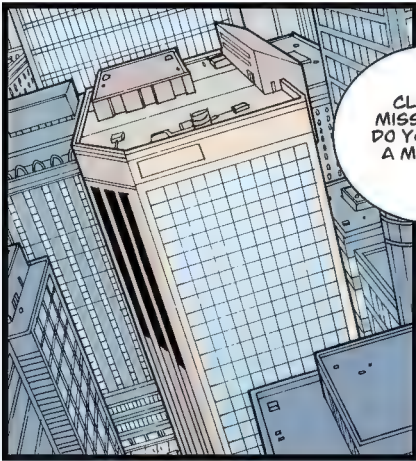


YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE WHAT A PAIN IN THE ASS IT IS TO BE MARRIED TO A SUPERHERO.

OH, I DON'T KNOW...







CLAIRE?
MISS BONO?
DO YOU HAVE
A MINUTE?

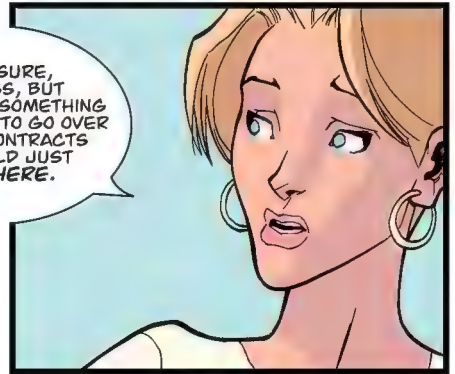


OH, HI
MISS GRAYSON.
DID YOU FORGET
SOMETHING
AT THE
OFFICE?



CLAIRE, I--I
WAS WONDERING
IF YOU WOULD GET
COFFEE WITH ME
LATER TODAY... IF
YOU HAD TIME.
I'D REALLY LIKE
TO TALK TO
YOU.

UM... SURE,
I GUESS, BUT
IF THERE'S SOMETHING
WE FORGOT TO GO OVER
ON THE CONTRACTS
WE COULD JUST
DO IT HERE.



NO--IT'S ABOUT MY HUSBAND,
I--HE... I JUST WANTED TO...
I DON'T HAVE ANYONE
ELSE TO TALK TO
AND I--

NO, IT'S NOT. I UNDERSTAND...
I LOST MY FATHER A FEW YEARS
AGO. I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE
GOING THROUGH.

I'LL MEET YOU AT THE COFFEE
SHOP ON THE FIRST FLOOR. I'VE
GOT A MEETING, BUT I'LL BE
DOWN IN ABOUT AN
HOUR.



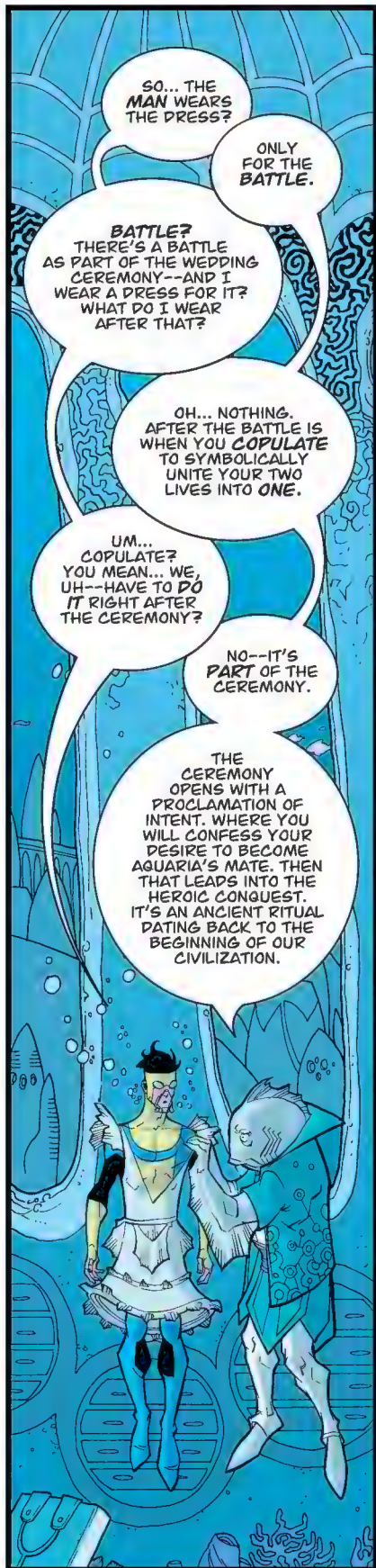
NO...
NEVER MIND...
THIS IS
STUPID.



OKAY.

THANKS.

I'LL SEE
YOU IN AN
HOUR.



SO... THE
MAN WEARS
THE DRESS?

ONLY
FOR THE
BATTLE.

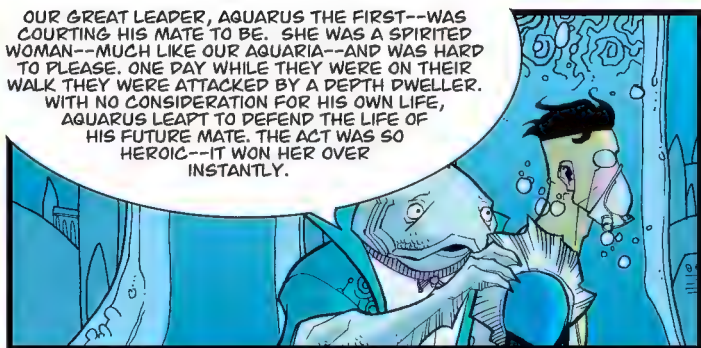
BATTLE?
THERE'S A BATTLE
AS PART OF THE WEDDING
CEREMONY--AND I
WEAR A DRESS FOR IT?
WHAT DO I WEAR
AFTER THAT?

OH... NOTHING.
AFTER THE BATTLE IS
WHEN YOU **COPULATE**
TO SYMBOLICALLY
UNITE YOUR TWO
LIVES INTO ONE.

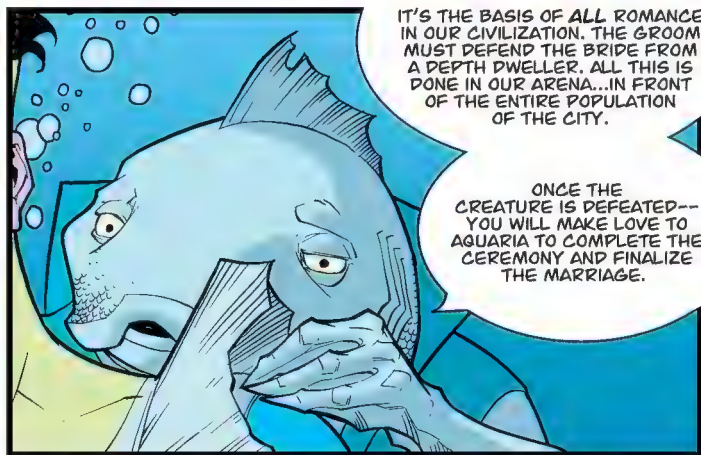
UM...
COPULATE?
YOU MEAN... WE,
UH--HAVE TO **DO**
IT RIGHT AFTER
THE CEREMONY?

NO--IT'S
PART OF THE
CEREMONY.

THE
CEREMONY
OPENS WITH A
PROCLAMATION OF
INTENT. WHERE YOU
WILL CONFESS YOUR
DESIRE TO BECOME
AQUARIA'S MATE. THEN
THAT LEADS INTO THE
HEROIC CONQUEST.
IT'S AN ANCIENT RITUAL
DATING BACK TO THE
BEGINNING OF OUR
CIVILIZATION.

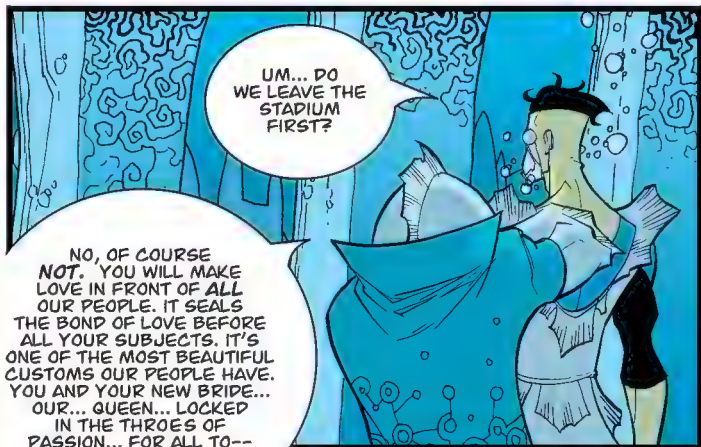


OUR GREAT LEADER, **AQUARUS THE FIRST**--WAS
COURTING HIS MATE TO BE. SHE WAS A SPIRITED
WOMAN--MUCH LIKE OUR **AQUARIA**--AND WAS HARD
TO PLEASE. ONE DAY WHILE THEY WERE ON THEIR
WALK THEY WERE ATTACKED BY A DEPTH DWELLER.
WITH NO CONSIDERATION FOR HIS OWN LIFE,
AQUARUS LEAPT TO DEFEND THE LIFE OF
HIS FUTURE MATE. THE ACT WAS SO
HEROIC--IT WON HER OVER
INSTANTLY.



IT'S THE BASIS OF ALL ROMANCE
IN OUR CIVILIZATION. THE GROOM
MUST DEFEND THE BRIDE FROM
A DEPTH DWELLER. ALL THIS IS
DONE IN OUR ARENA...IN FRONT
OF THE ENTIRE POPULATION
OF THE CITY.

ONCE THE
CREATURE IS DEFEATED--
YOU WILL MAKE LOVE TO
AQUARIA TO COMPLETE THE
CEREMONY AND FINALIZE
THE MARRIAGE.



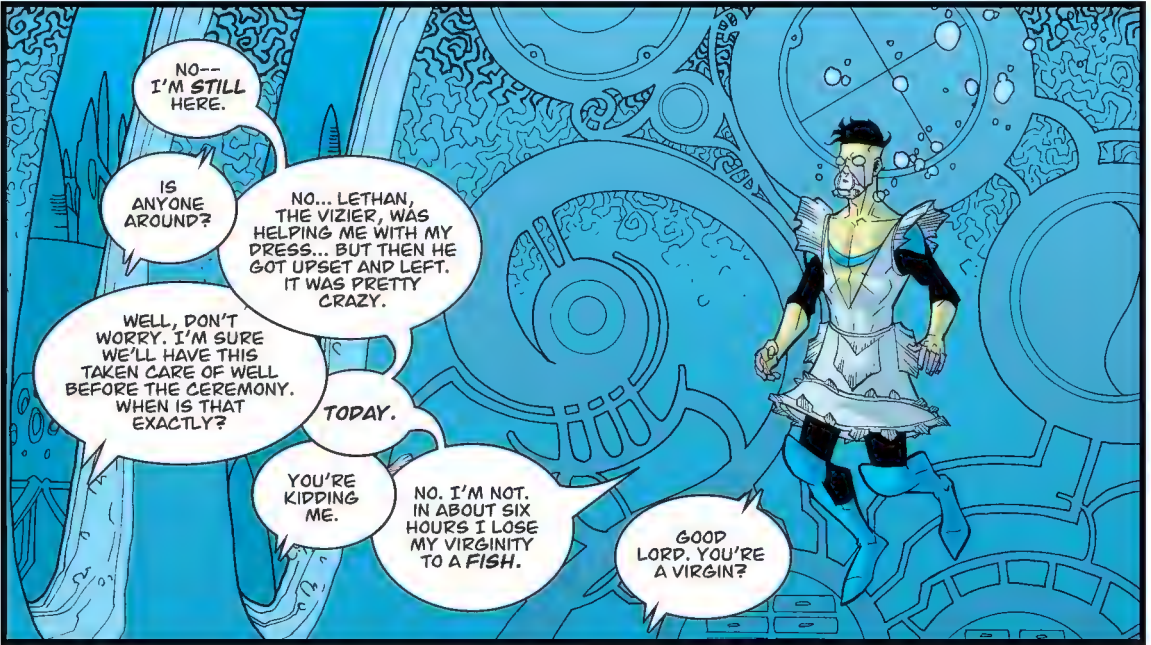
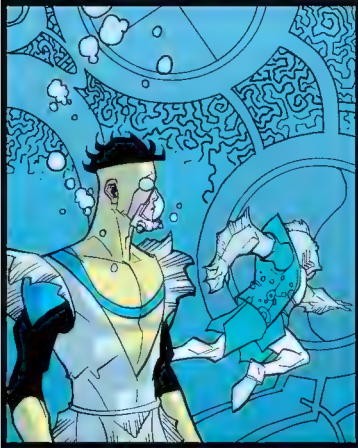
UM... DO
WE LEAVE THE
STADIUM
FIRST?

NO, OF COURSE
NOT. YOU WILL MAKE
LOVE IN FRONT OF ALL
OUR PEOPLE. IT SEALS
THE BOND OF LOVE BEFORE
ALL YOUR SUBJECTS. IT'S
ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
CUSTOMS OUR PEOPLE HAVE.
YOU AND YOUR NEW BRIDE...
OUR... QUEEN... LOCKED
IN THE THROES OF
PASSION... FOR ALL TO--



SEE.

YOU'LL
HAVE TO
EXCUSE
ME.

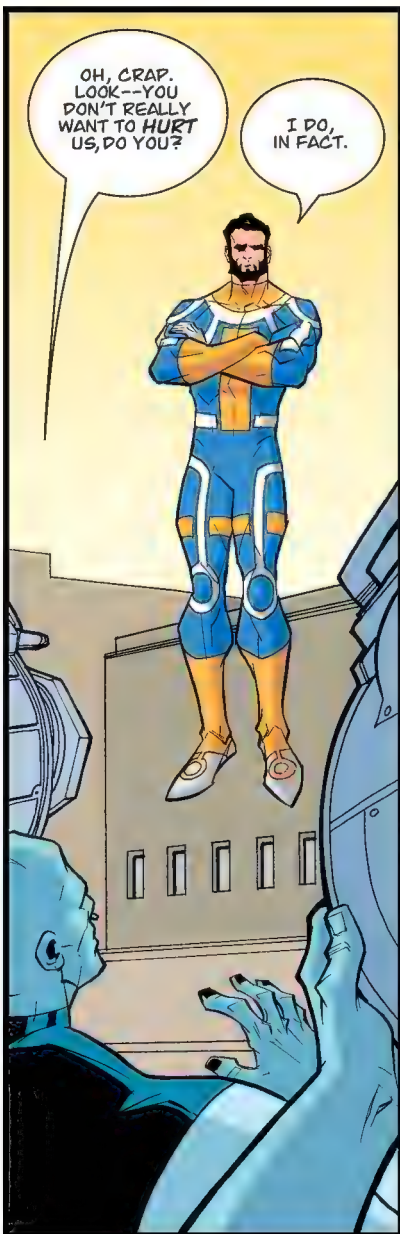




FINALLY! WITH THIS EQUIPMENT WE'LL BE ABLE TO DECIPHER WHICH ONE OF US IS THE ORIGINAL-- AND WHICH IS THE CLONE.

YES, AND THEN WE'LL BE ABLE TO TURN OUR ATTENTION TO MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS, SUCH AS WORLD CONQUEST AND REVENGE AGAINST THOSE WHO HAVE THWARTED OUR PLANS!

UH, GUYS.



OH, CRAP. LOOK--YOU DON'T REALLY WANT TO HURT US, DO YOU?

I DO, IN FACT.



YOU SHOULDN'T BE PISSED. WE PUT YOU TOGETHER! WE BROUGHT YOU BACK TO LIFE! IF IT WASN'T FOR US--YOU'D STILL BE ROTTING IN THAT GRAVE!



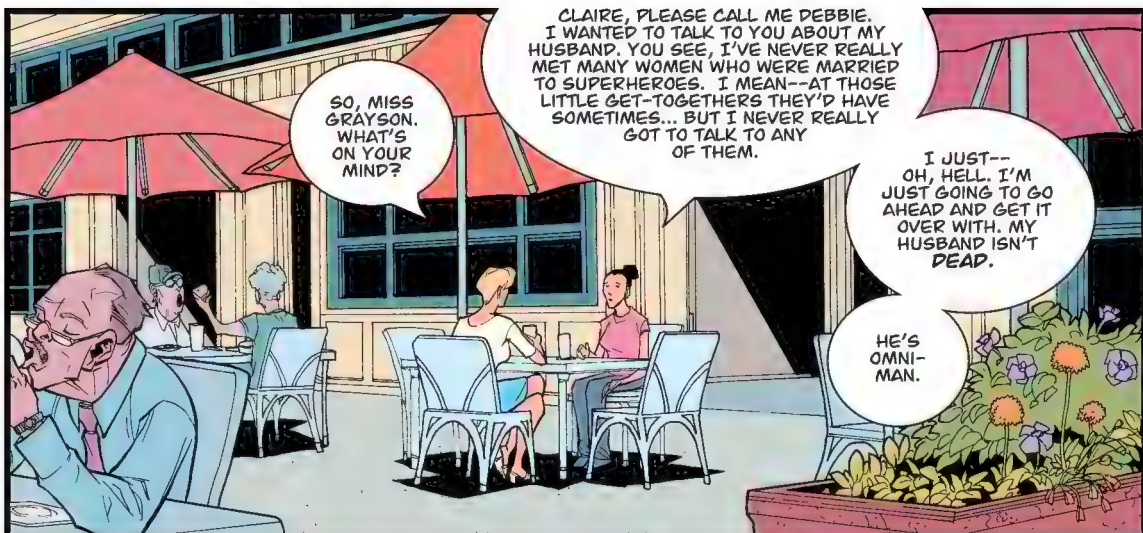
YEAH!! YOU SHOULD BE THANKING US!!



I WOULDN'T CONSIDER WHAT'S COMING NEXT TO BE A PROPER "THANK YOU."



BUT I'LL LET YOU BE THE JUDGE.

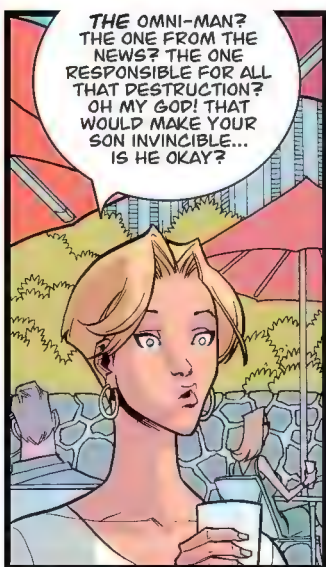


SO, MISS GRAYSON. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

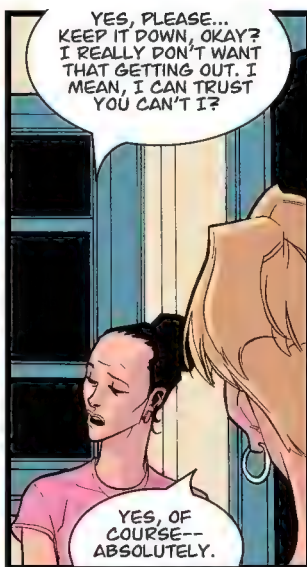
CLAIRE, PLEASE CALL ME DEBBIE. I WANTED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT MY HUSBAND. YOU SEE, I'VE NEVER REALLY MET MANY WOMEN WHO WERE MARRIED TO SUPERHEROES. I MEAN--AT THOSE LITTLE GET-TOGETHERS THEY'D HAVE SOMETIMES... BUT I NEVER REALLY GOT TO TALK TO ANY OF THEM.

I JUST-- OH, HELL. I'M JUST GOING TO GO AHEAD AND GET IT OVER WITH. MY HUSBAND ISN'T DEAD.

HE'S OMNI-MAN.



THE OMNI-MAN? THE ONE FROM THE NEWS? THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THAT DESTRUCTION? OH MY GOD! THAT WOULD MAKE YOUR SON INVINCIBLE... IS HE OKAY?



YES, PLEASE... KEEP IT DOWN, OKAY? I REALLY DON'T WANT THAT GETTING OUT. I MEAN, I CAN TRUST YOU CAN'T I?

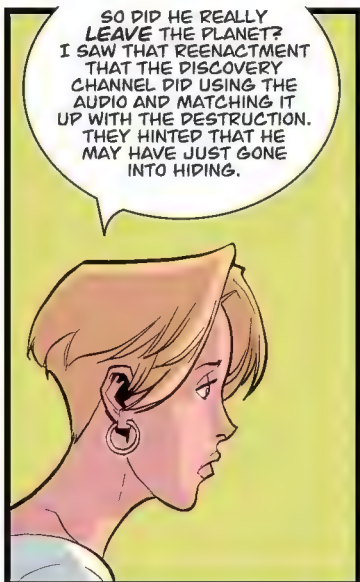
YES, OF COURSE-- ABSOLUTELY.



OF, COURSE... I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW MUCH BETTER HIS BOOKS WOULD BE SELLING IF THE WORLD KNEW...

CLAIRE.

DON'T WORRY. SUPERPATRIOT HIMSELF DOESN'T HAVE A SECRET IDENTITY BUT I UNDERSTAND THE NEED, ESPECIALLY IN YOUR CASE WITH YOUR SON. AND AFTER ALL YOUR HUSBAND HAS DONE.



SO DID HE REALLY LEAVE THE PLANET? I SAW THAT REENACTMENT THAT THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL DID USING THE AUDIO AND MATCHING IT UP WITH THE DESTRUCTION. THEY HINTED THAT HE MAY HAVE JUST GONE INTO HIDING.



NO. HE'S GONE.



SO YOU'RE HUSBAND ISN'T DEAD, HE'S JUST AN EVIL SON OF A BITCH THAT TRIED TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD, AND THEN LEFT YOU AND YOUR SON AND RAN OFF TO GOD KNOWS WHERE. SCREW HIM... HE TURNED OUT TO BE JUST LIKE MOST OF THE OTHER JERKS ON THIS PLANET.

IT'S A LITTLE MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.



WITH THIS FINAL ADORNMENT... YOUR VISAGE IS **COMPLETE**. YOU ARE READY TO GREET YOUR B--BRIDE AND BEGIN THE--THE CEREMONY.

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF-- TIME--

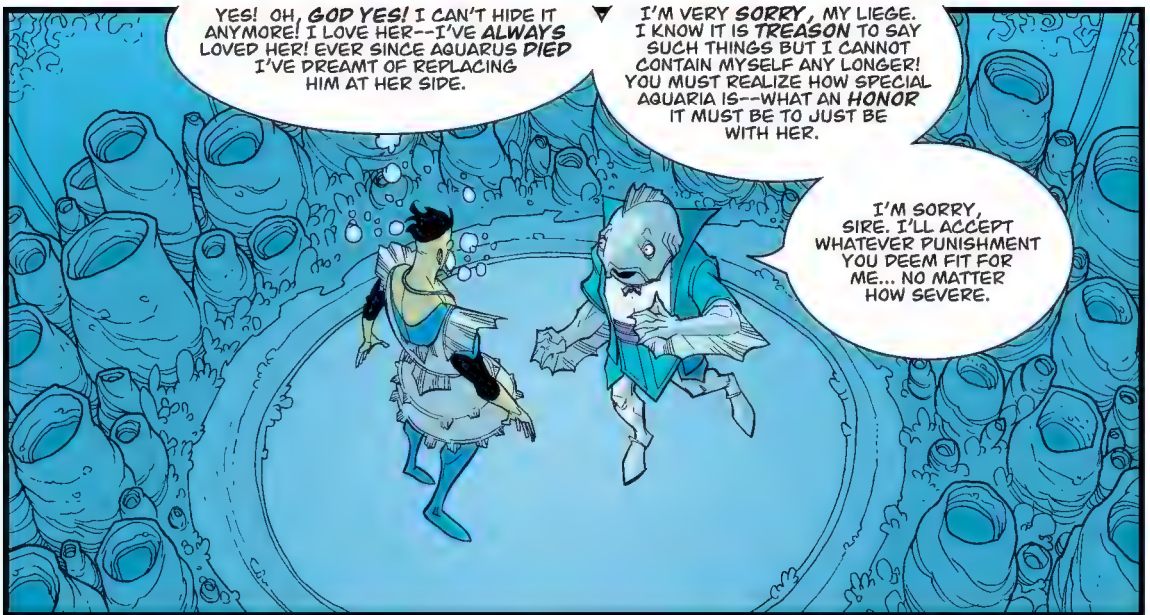


HEY, MAN... ARE YOU OKAY?

I--NO.



LETHAN... YOU LOVE HER, DON'T YOU?



YES! OH, **GOD YES!** I CAN'T HIDE IT ANYMORE! I LOVE HER--I'VE ALWAYS LOVED HER! EVER SINCE **AQUARUS** DIED I'VE DREAMT OF REPLACING HIM AT HER SIDE.

I'M VERY **SORRY**, MY LIEGE. I KNOW IT IS **TREASON** TO SAY SUCH THINGS BUT I CANNOT CONTAIN MYSELF ANY LONGER! YOU MUST REALIZE HOW SPECIAL **AQUARIA** IS--WHAT AN **HONOR** IT MUST BE TO JUST BE WITH HER.

I'M SORRY, SIRE. I'LL ACCEPT WHATEVER PUNISHMENT YOU DEEM FIT FOR ME... NO MATTER HOW SEVERE.

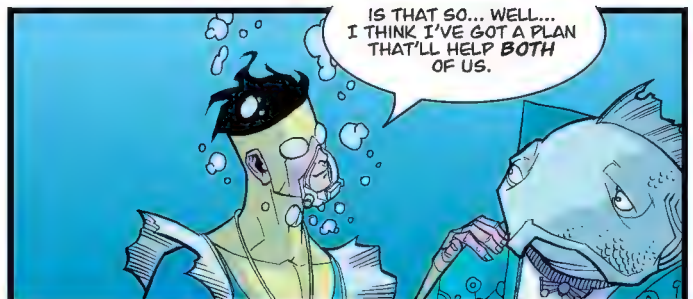


PUNISH YOU? DUDE, YOU CAN HAVE HER. I'VE ONLY MET HER ONCE. I'M JUST DOING THIS TO KEEP YOUR PEOPLE FROM ATTACKING THE SURFACE.

WHY HAVEN'T YOU JUST TOLD HER HOW YOU FEEL? IF SHE HAS YOU... SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO MARRY ME.

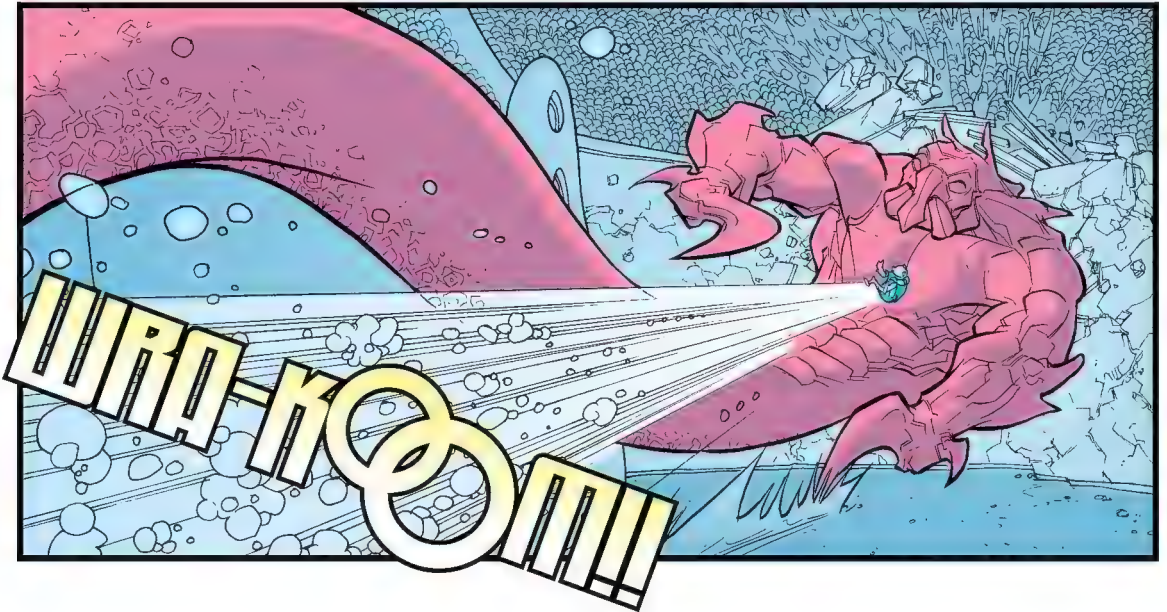
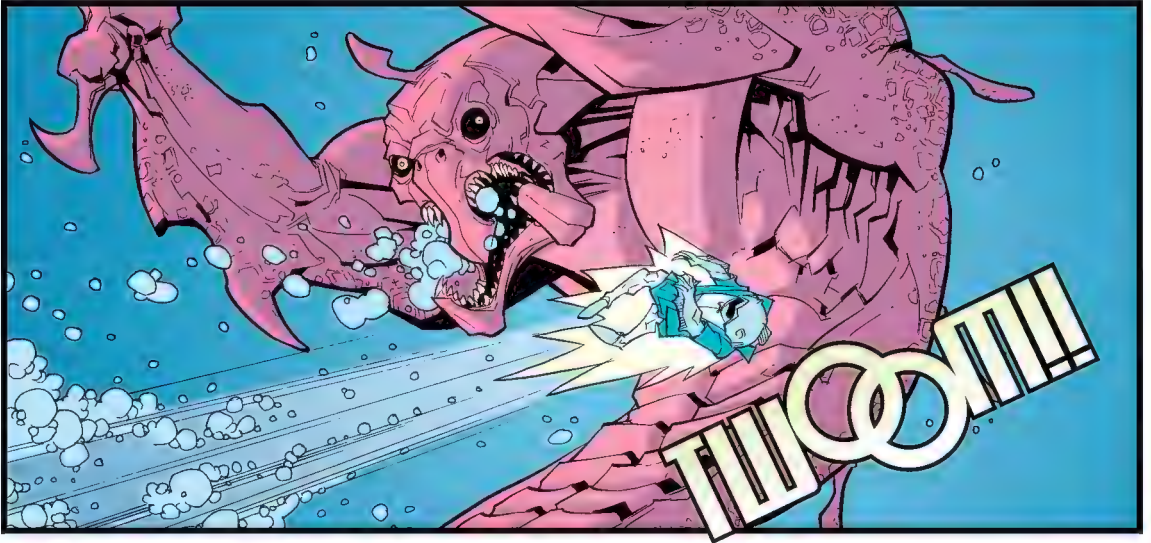


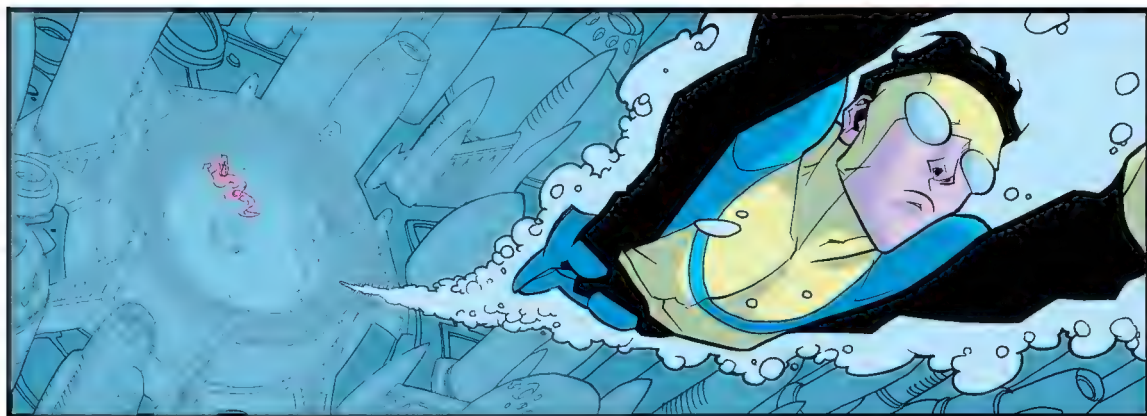
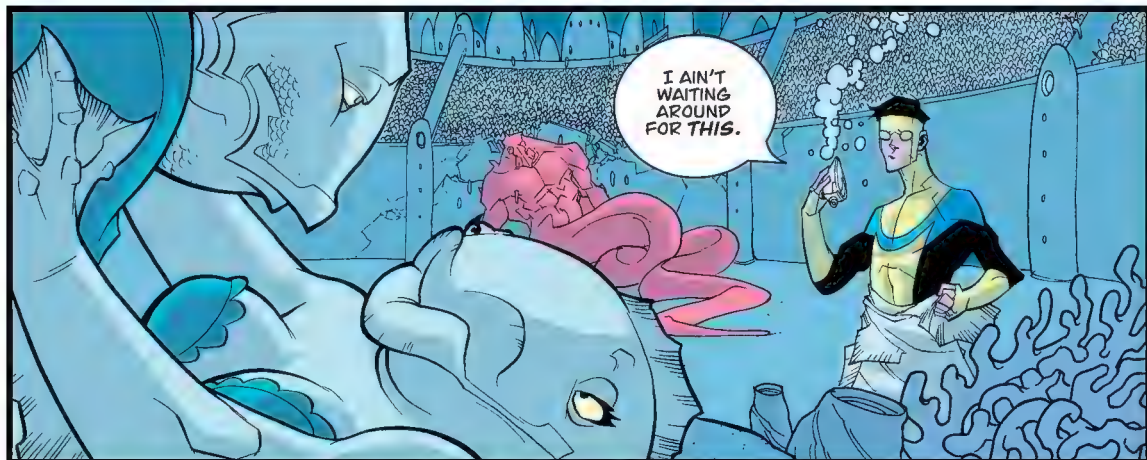
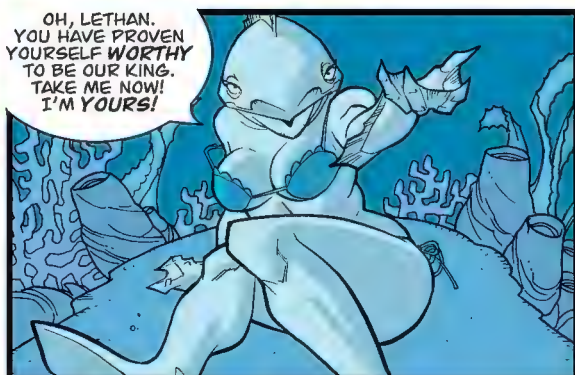
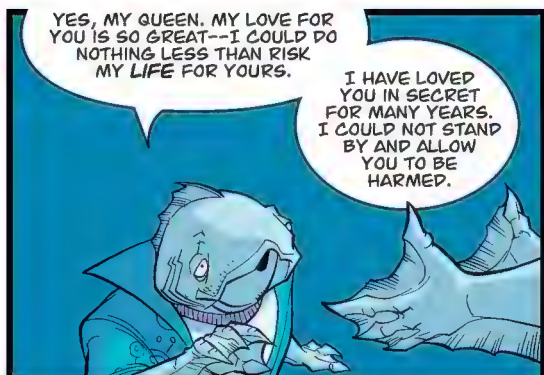
I'M NOT **ROYALTY**. YOUR SITUATION WITH HER IS AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE. I WOULD HAVE TO DO SOMETHING IMMENSE TO ELEVATE MY STATUS ENOUGH TO BE WORTHY OF HER-- AND THE **CROWN**, IN FRONT OF YOUR PEOPLE.

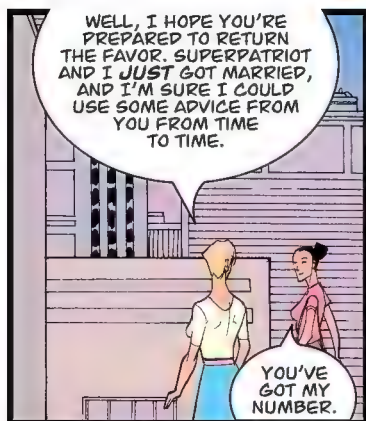
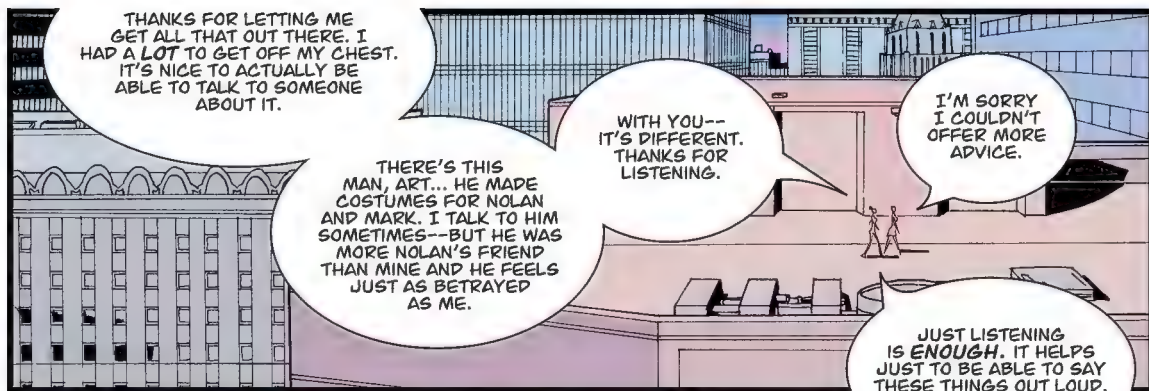


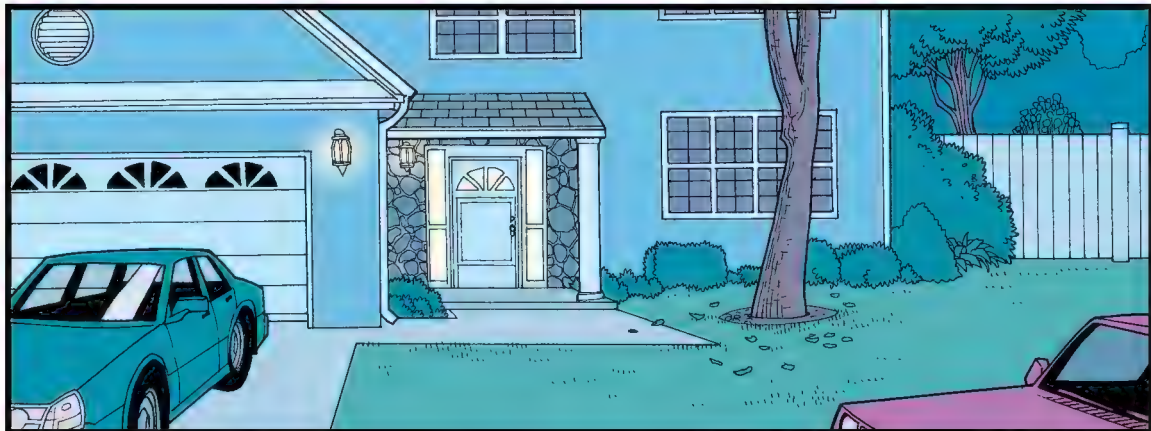
IS THAT SO... WELL... I THINK I'VE GOT A PLAN THAT'LL HELP **BOTH** OF US.











SOMETHING I NEVER GOT AROUND TO ASKING... HOW DID YOU KNOW MARK'S SECRET IDENTITY?

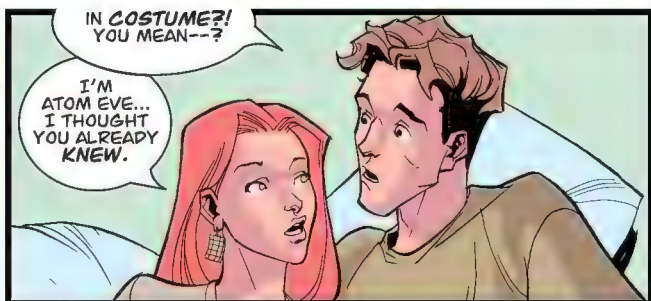
I USED TO THINK YOU TWO WERE GOING OUT... UNTIL HE GOT WITH AMBER. HOW'D YOU FIND OUT?

I RECOGNIZED HIM FROM WHEN WE TEAMED-UP. I MET HIM IN **COSTUME** FIRST.



IN **COSTUME**?! YOU MEAN--?

I'M ATOM EVE... I THOUGHT YOU ALREADY KNEW.



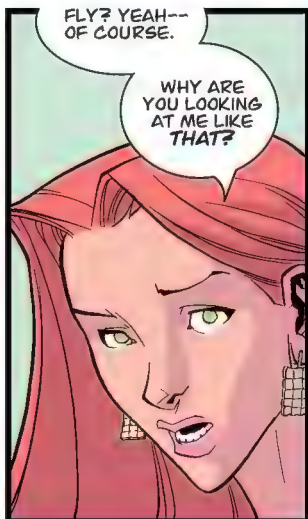
THIS IS SO GAY.



SO YOU CAN?

FLY? YEAH-- OF COURSE.

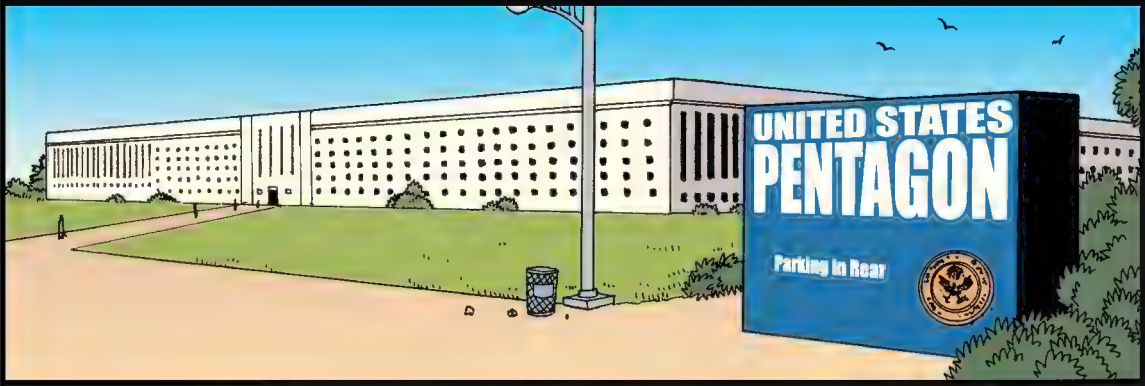
WHY ARE YOU LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT?

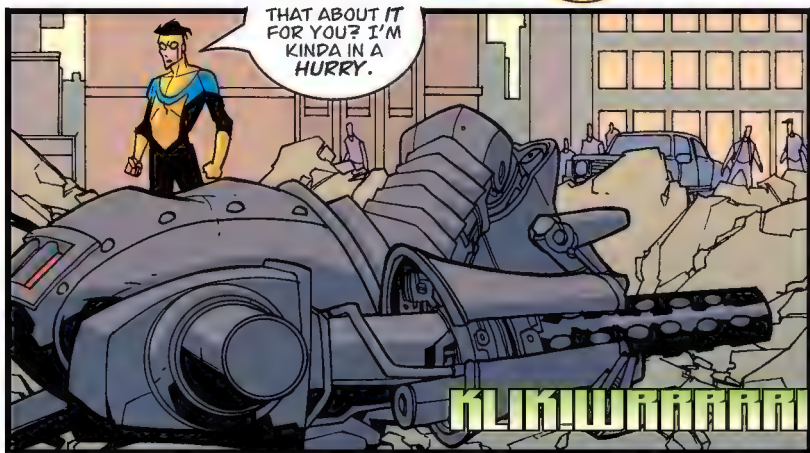
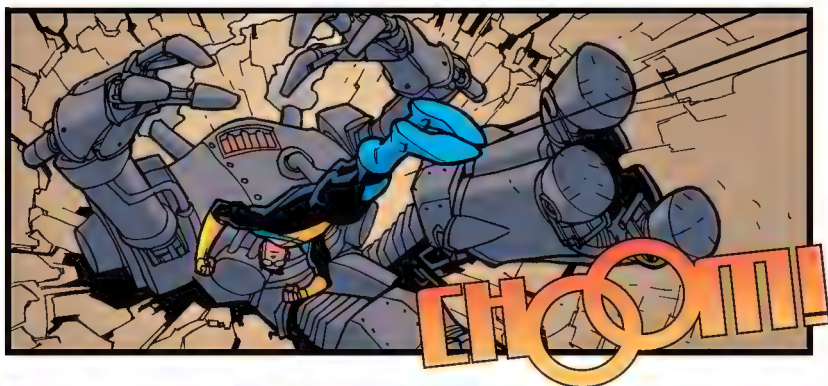
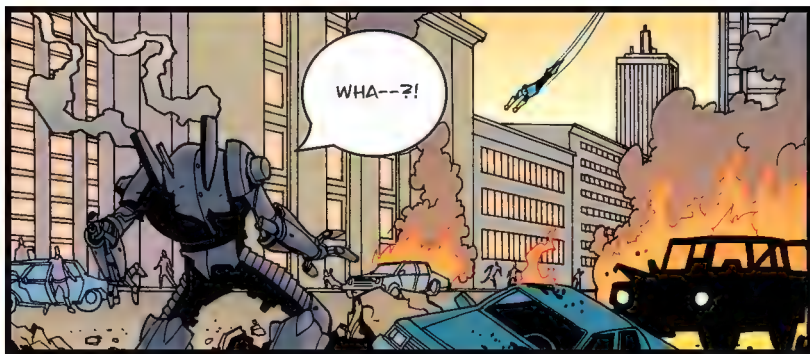




CHAPTER THREE

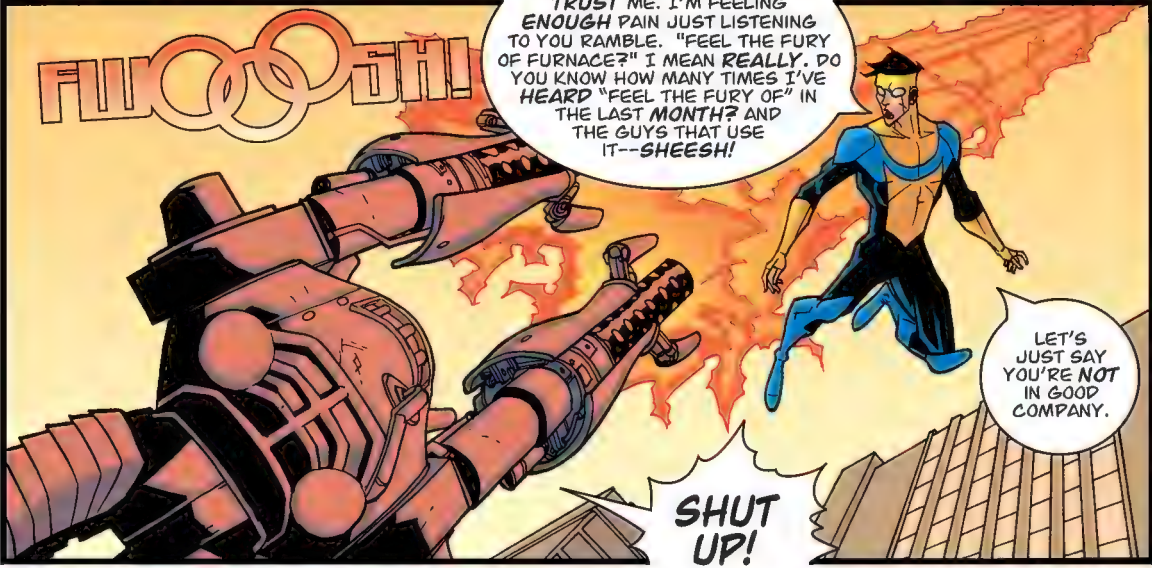
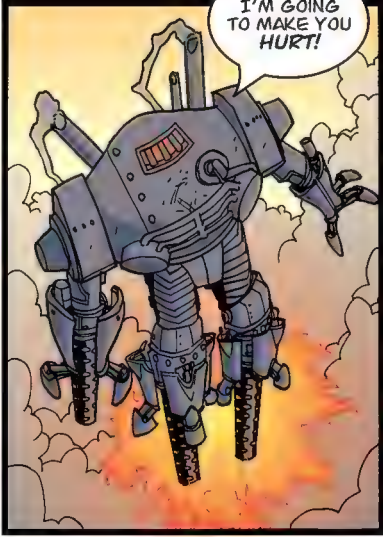
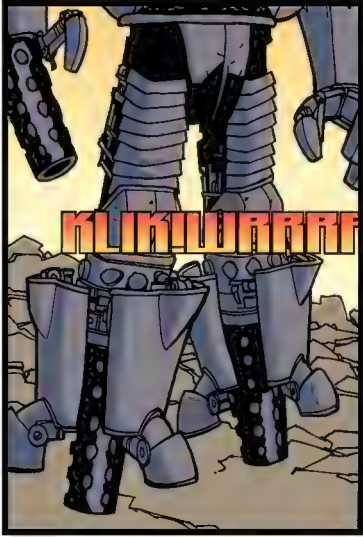


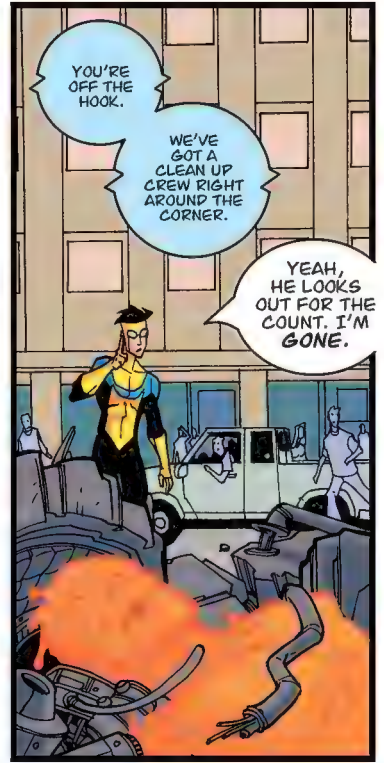
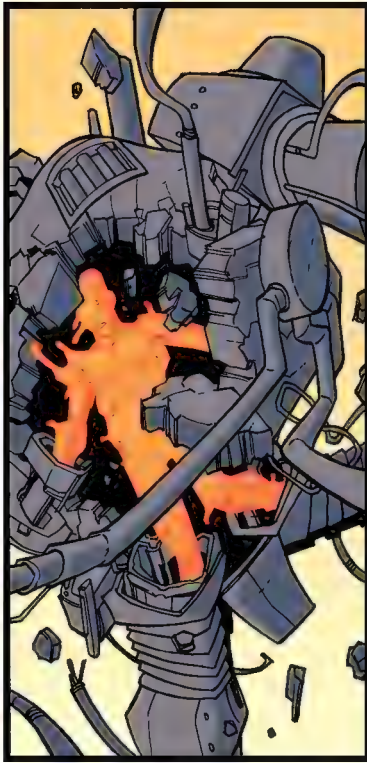
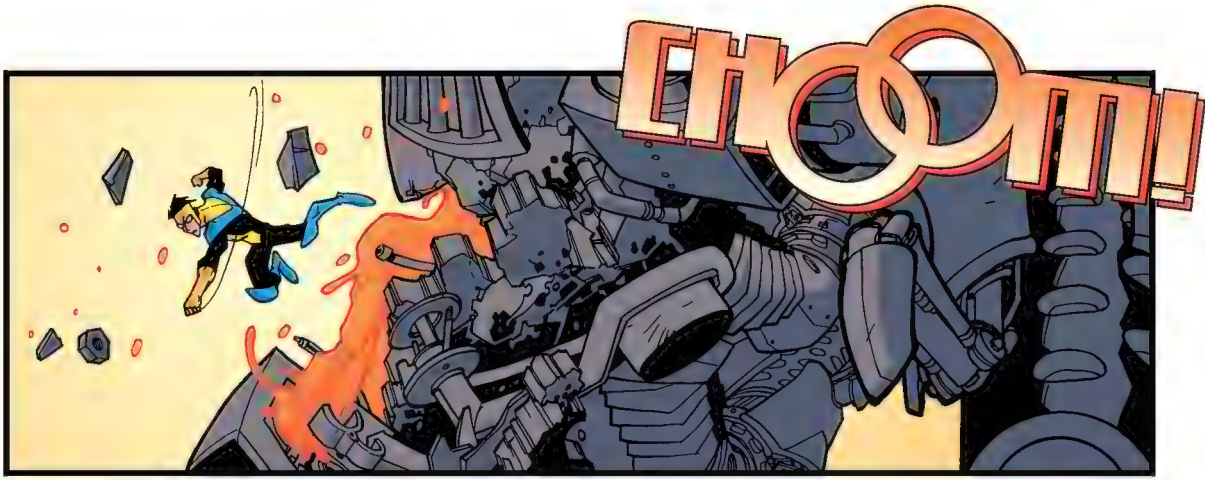


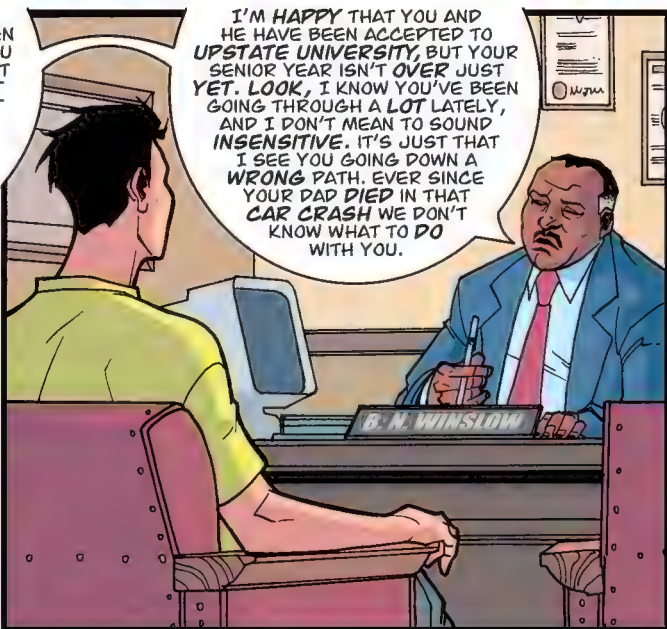
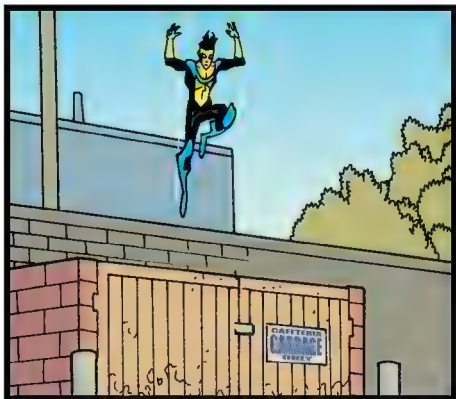


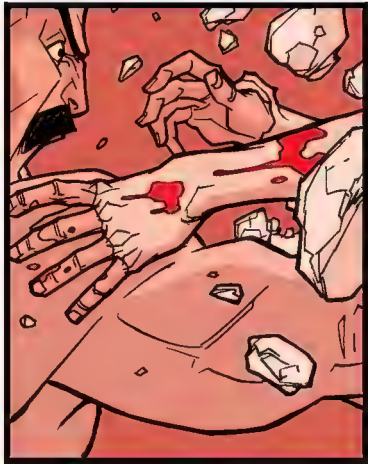
FEEL THE
FURY OF
FURNACE!

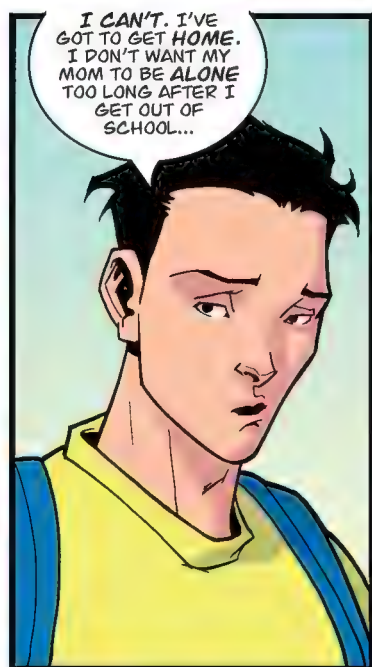


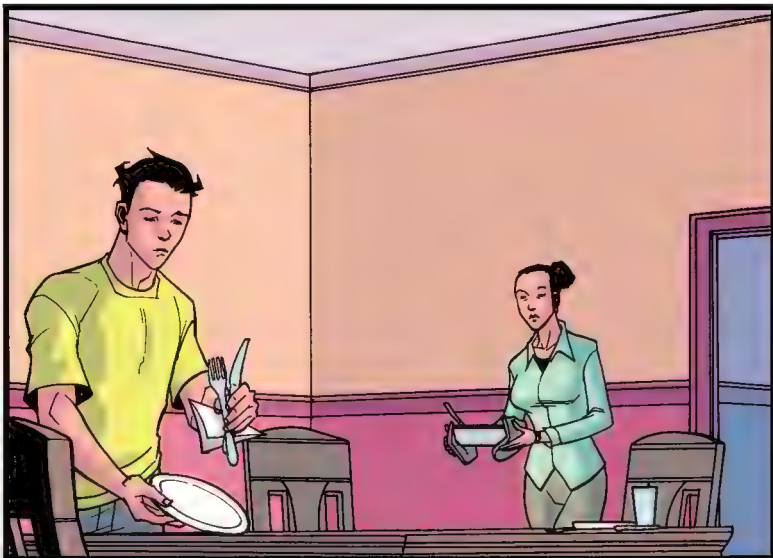
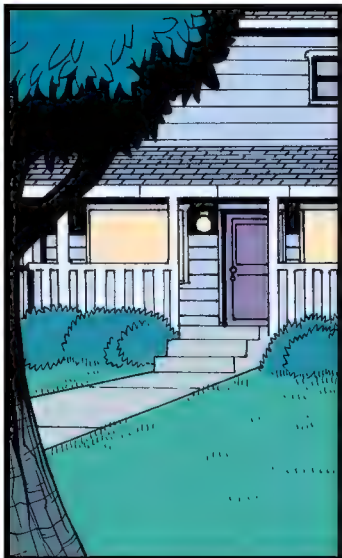












Y'KNOW... SOMETIMES I **FORGET** ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED--EVERYTHING HE **DID**, AND FOR A SECOND I THINK HE'S GOING TO WHISK INTO THAT CHAIR AND EVERYTHING'S GOING TO GO BACK TO **NORMAL**--BACK TO THE WAY THINGS WERE.

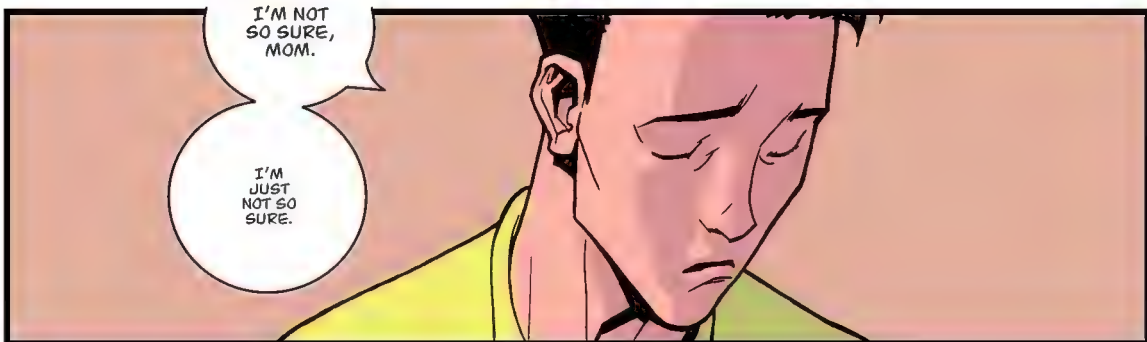


I KNOW **EXACTLY** WHAT YOU MEAN. WHEN I HAVE THE COSTUME ON AND I'M OUT FIGHTING BAD GUYS I **FORGET** ALL ABOUT **DAD**... I ALMOST FEEL NORMAL FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

JUST A LITTLE WHILE, THOUGH.

MOM, I DON'T THINK I'M EVER GOING TO BE **OKAY**. NOT AFTER **THIS**.

YOU'LL BE **FINE**, MARK. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS. IF I CAN, YOU CAN.



I'M NOT SO SURE, MOM.

I'M JUST NOT SO SURE.



CHAPTER FOUR





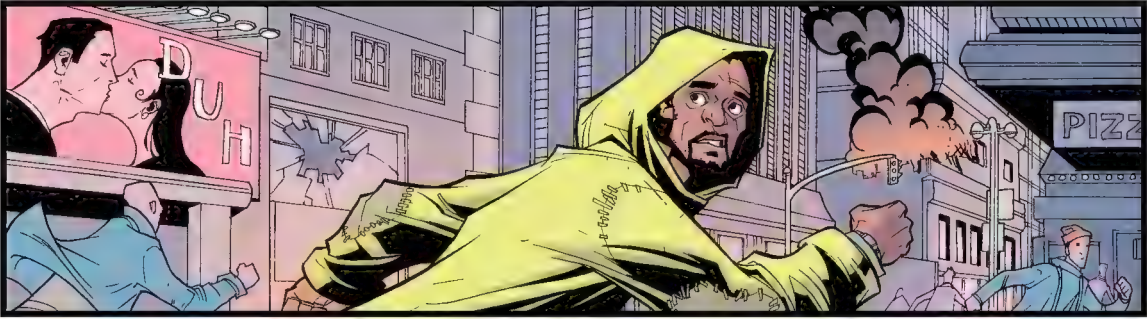
RESIST
AND DIE.

IT IS ONLY
NATURAL FOR
YOU TO FEEL THAT
MY FATHER AND I HAVE
DONE YOU SOME GREAT
WRONG BY ASSUMING
CONTROL OF THIS
PLANET.

THAT IS NOT
THE CASE. IN THE
LONG RUN YOU WILL
COME TO REALIZE THAT
WHAT WE DO HERE WILL
HELP YOUR CIVILIZATION
TO BETTER ITSELF--
WE WILL **IMPROVE**
THIS WORLD.

HOWEVER,
YOUR COOPERATION
IS **ESSENTIAL**. IT IS
IMPORTANT TO US THAT
THE CHANGEOVER
BE AS PAINLESS AS
POSSIBLE.

SO, ANY
PERSON OR
PERSONS WHO
OFFER ANY FORM OF
RESISTANCE WILL BE
TERMINATED
ON SIGHT.





WERE YOU FOLLOWED?

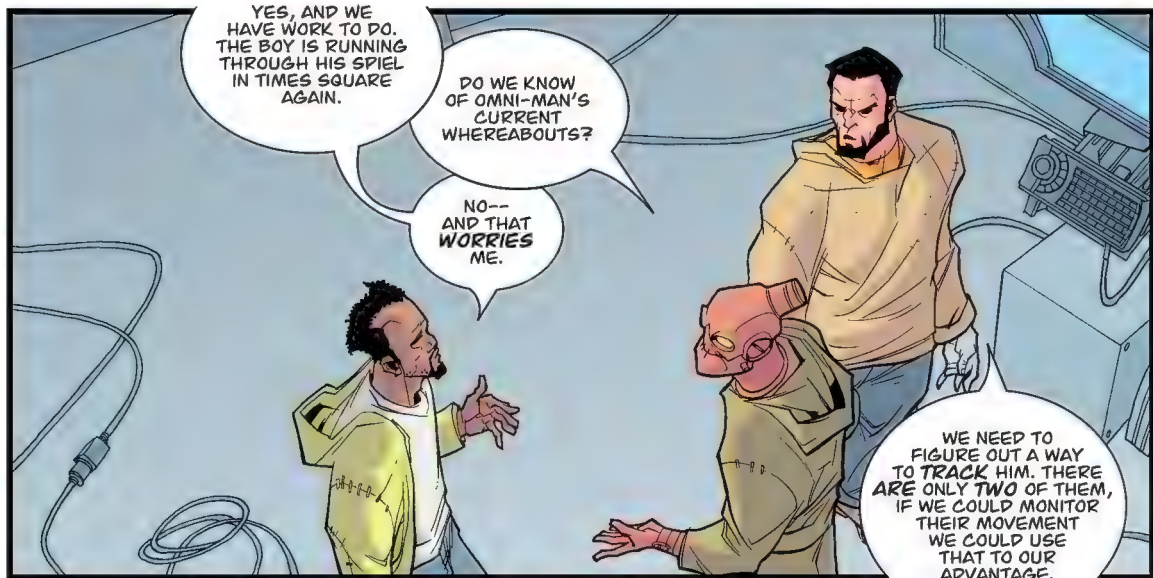


OF COURSE NOT. I UNDERSTAND THE GRAVITY OF OUR SITUATION AND I ASSURE YOU I HAVE TAKEN THE NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS.



ARE YOU CERTAIN?

ANGSTROM POSSESSES INTELLECT NEARLY AS SUBSTANTIAL AS MY OWN. THIS ANIMOSITY BETWEEN YOU TWO IS HIGHLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.



YES, AND WE HAVE WORK TO DO. THE BOY IS RUNNING THROUGH HIS SPIEL IN TIMES SQUARE AGAIN.

DO WE KNOW OF OMNI-MAN'S CURRENT WHEREABOUTS?

NO-- AND THAT WORRIES ME.

WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO TRACK HIM. THERE ARE ONLY TWO OF THEM, IF WE COULD MONITOR THEIR MOVEMENT WE COULD USE THAT TO OUR ADVANTAGE.



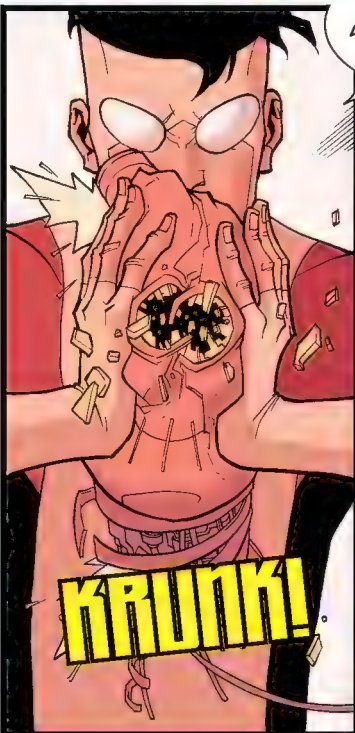
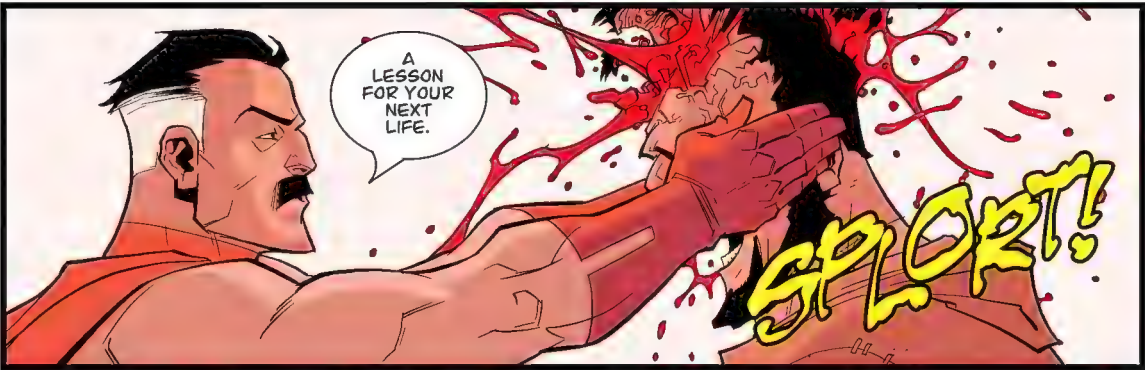
I'M DOING EVERYTHING I CAN. REALLY. IT'S ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO GET MY HANDS ON THE TECHNOLOGY NEEDED.

LOOK AT THIS PLACE. HOW ARE WE GOING TO DO ANYTHING WITH THIS LAUGHABLE ARRAY OF EQUIPMENT?

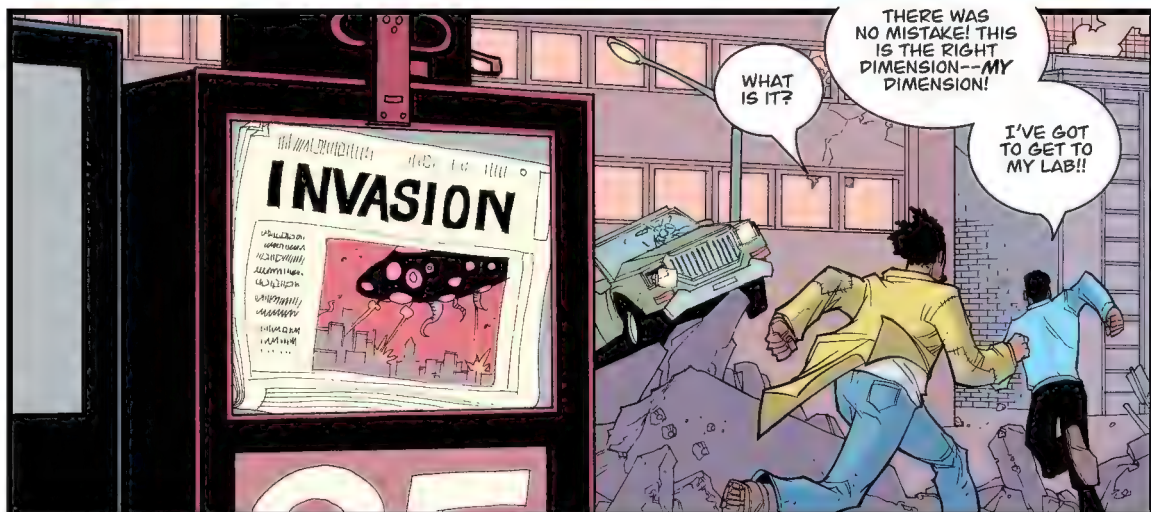
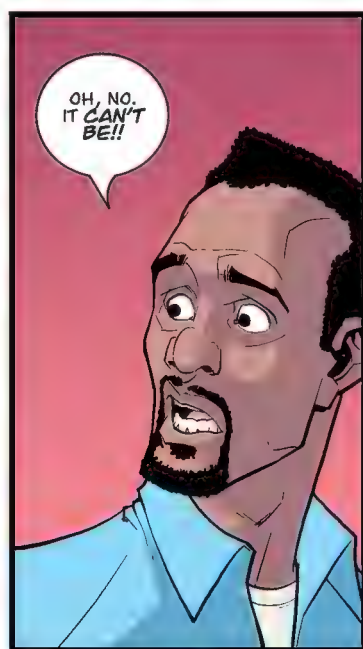
MY HANDS ARE TIED.

YOU'RE PROVING MORE USELESS BY THE DAY. WERE IT NOT FOR ROBOT'S CONTINUED SUPPORT YOU WOULD HAVE NO PLACE HERE.











THIS IS NOT GOING WELL.

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!

THEY'RE NOT THAT TOUGH AT ALL, BUT THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. IT SEEMS LIKE FOR EVERY ONE OF THESE THINGS I KNOCK DOWN, THREE MORE TAKE ITS PLACE.

AT THIS RATE... THEY'RE GOING TO BEAT US.

THAT IS NOT AN OPTION.

I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU PANSIES, BUT I'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR SIX HOURS AND I HAVEN'T EVEN BROKEN A SWEAT.

WHATEVER IT TAKES. WE'RE BEATING THESE CLOWNS!

PREACH ON, SISTER! I'M NOT READY TO GIVE UP EITHER. THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE!

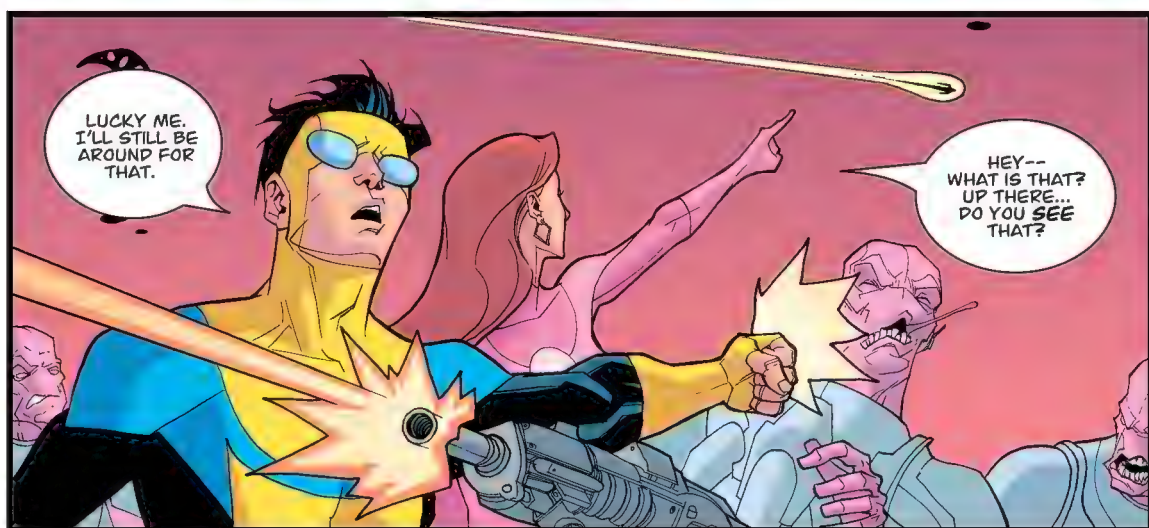
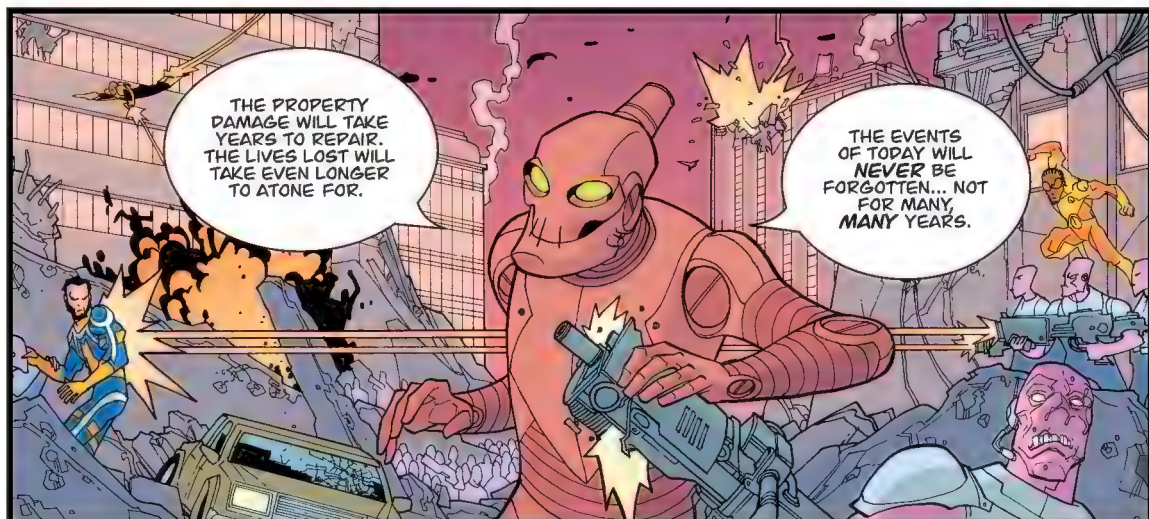
PEOPLE ARE COUNTING ON US!

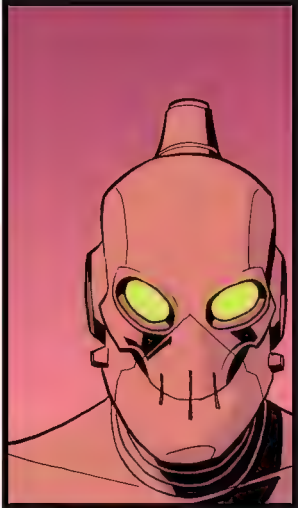
I NEVER SAID ANYTHING ABOUT GIVING UP.

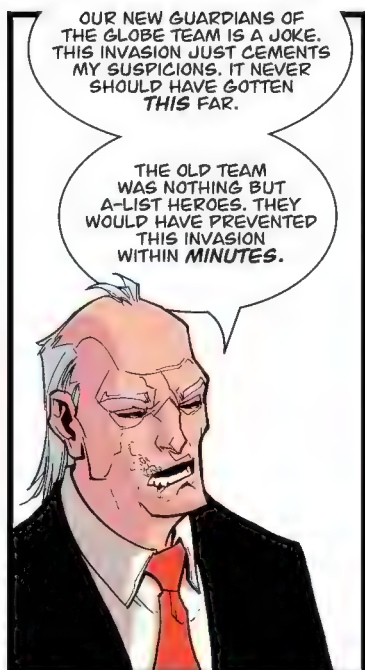
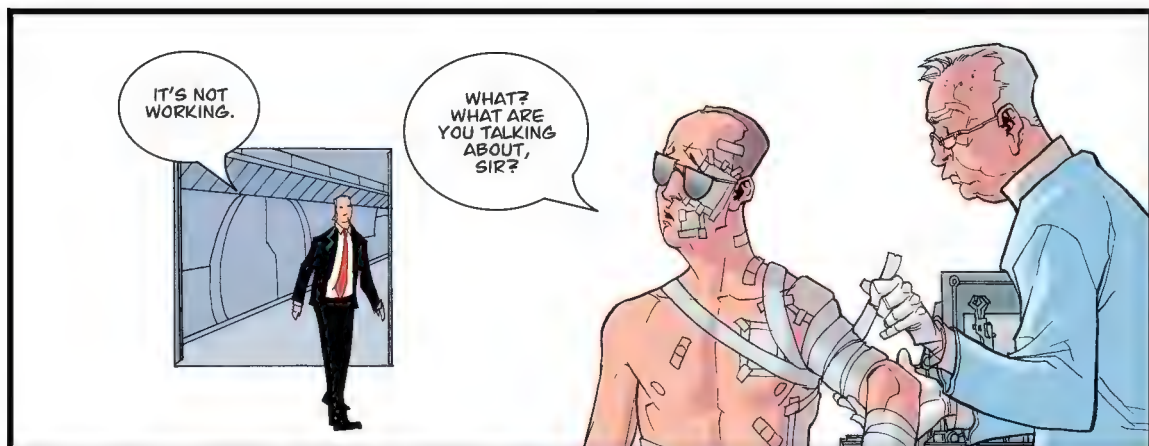
WE'LL BEAT THEM... WE ALWAYS DO. WE HAVE TO.

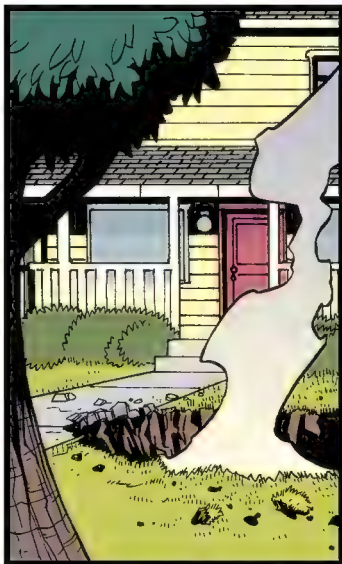
I HAVE DONE THE CALCULATIONS. THE ODDS ARE IN OUR FAVOR TO EVENTUALLY SUCCEED.

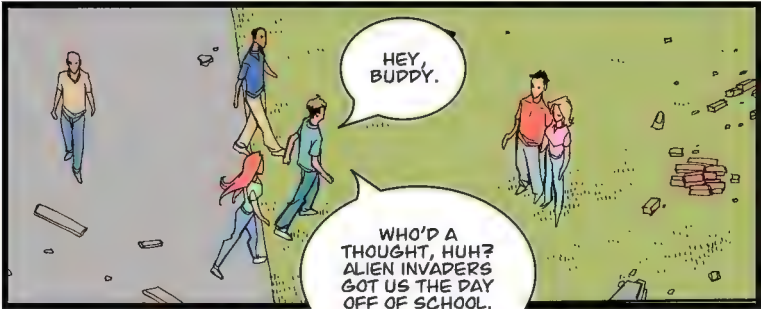
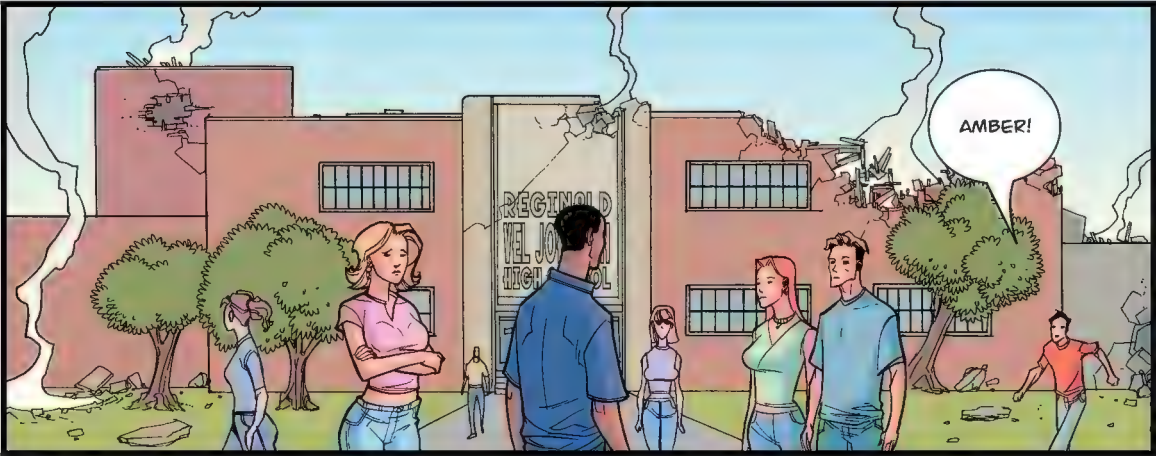
BUT AT WHAT COST...

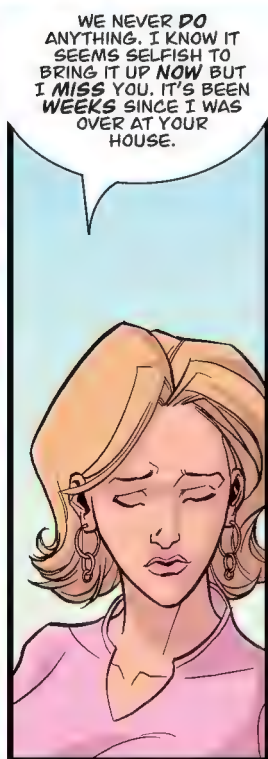
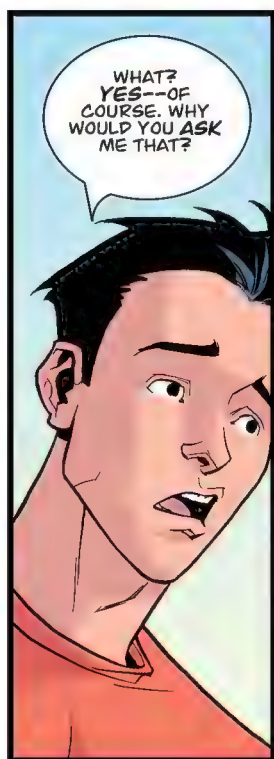


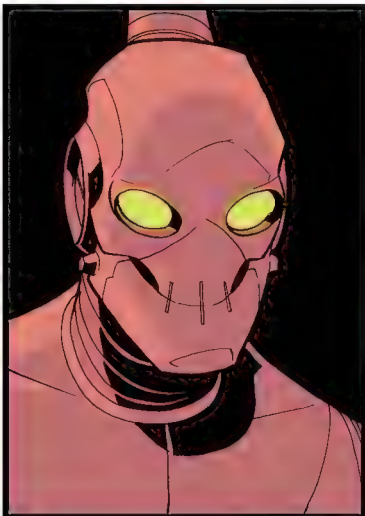


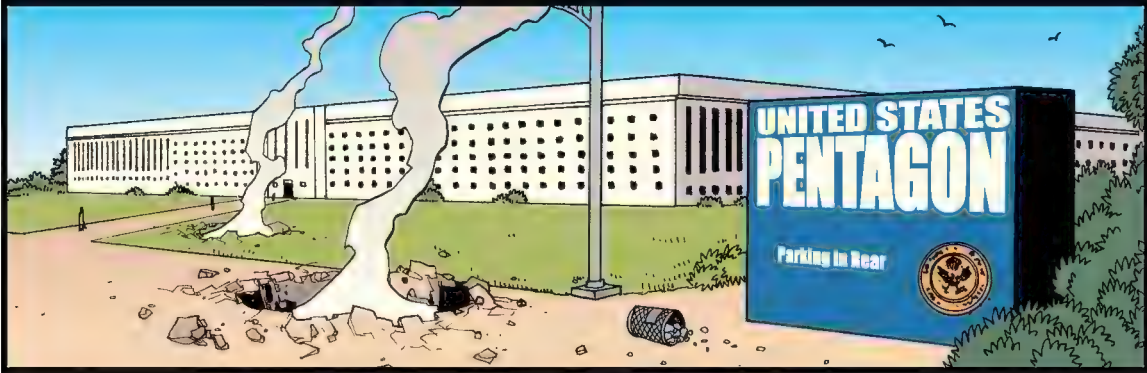














SO, HOW
ARE THINGS
GOING WITH
WILLIAM?

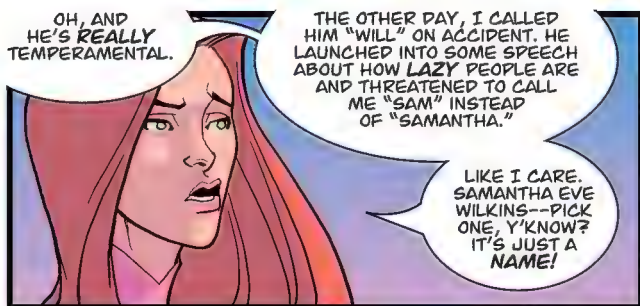


OH, IT'S GREAT, Y'KNOW--
WELL... IT'S KINDA WEIRD. THE
THINGS I LIKE ABOUT HIM...
ARE ALSO THE THINGS
THAT I HATE.

HOW FUN HE IS,
HIS **CHILDISH** BEHAVIOR...
IT'S BOTH REALLY CUTE AND
ANNOYING AT THE SAME TIME.



I KNOW EXACTLY
WHAT YOU'RE TALKING
ABOUT--ASIDE FROM
THE CUTE PART.



OH, AND
HE'S REALLY
TEMPERAMENTAL.

THE OTHER DAY, I CALLED
HIM "WILL" ON ACCIDENT. HE
LAUNCHED INTO SOME SPEECH
ABOUT HOW LAZY PEOPLE ARE
AND THREATENED TO CALL
ME "SAM" INSTEAD
OF "SAMANTHA."

LIKE I CARE.
SAMANTHA EVE
WILKINS--PICK
ONE, Y'KNOW?
IT'S JUST A
NAME!



I'VE
HEARD THAT
SPEECH A FEW
TIMES.

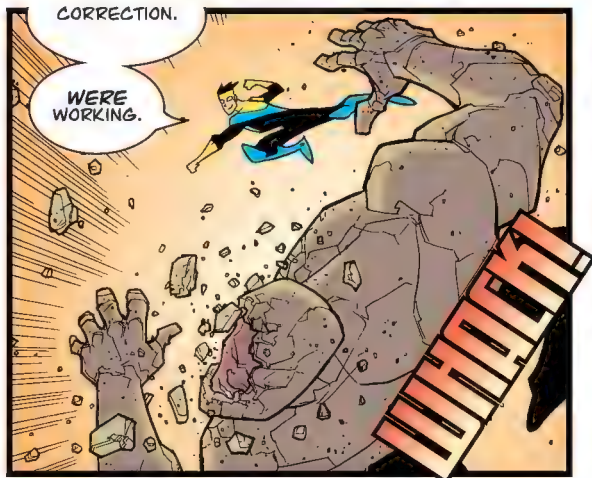
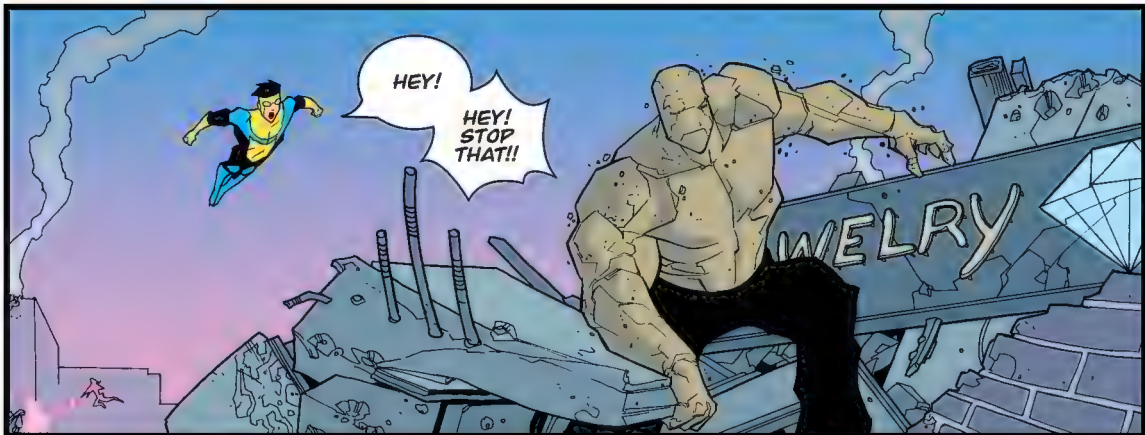


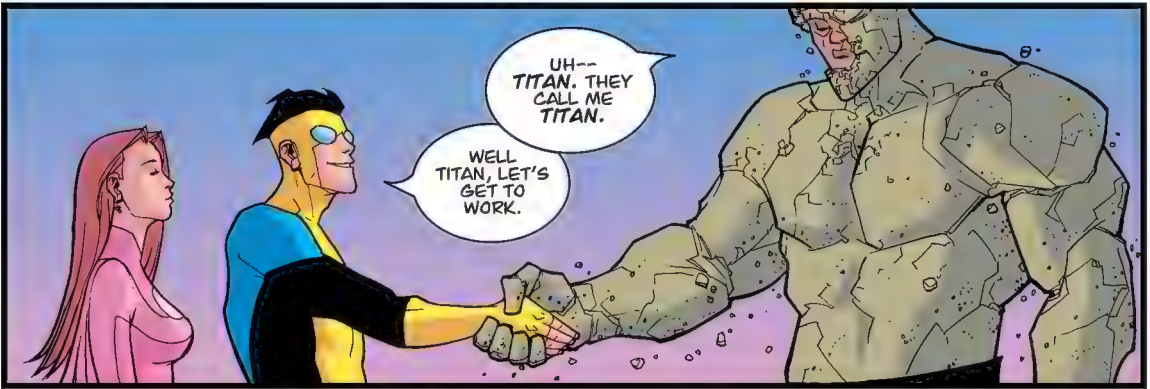
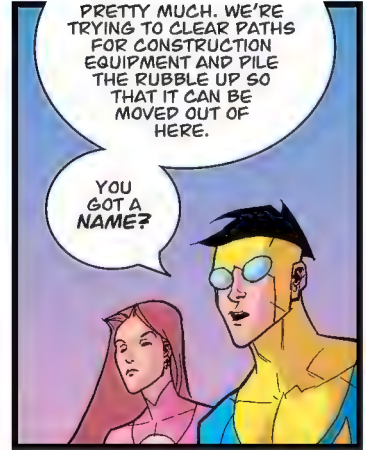
OH, AND DID YOU KNOW
HE DIDN'T KNOW I WAS
ATOM EVE? HE FOUND OUT
I COULD FLY LAST WEEK--
WE HAVEN'T SPENT A
NIGHT ON THE GROUND
SINCE THEN!

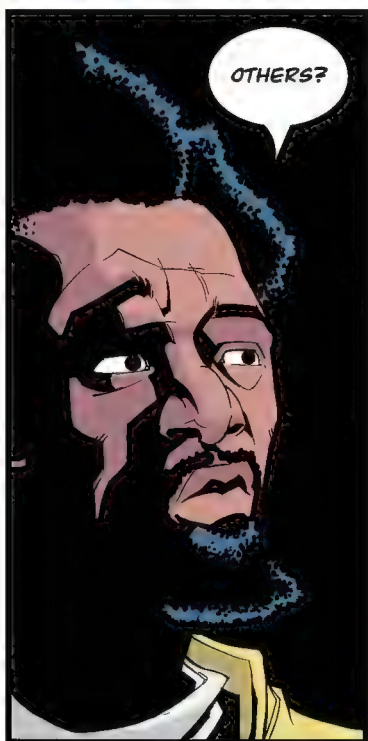
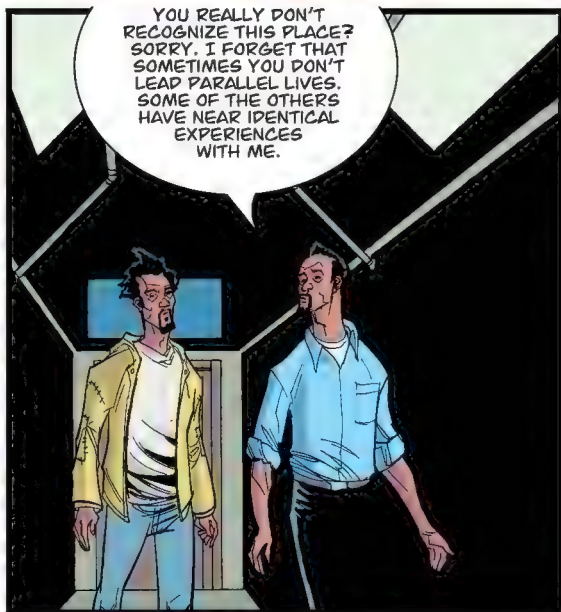


YEAH--I HAD A
WEEK LIKE THAT,
TOO. I FINALLY
JUST TOLD HIM
TO--

CRAP.
HOLD
ON.









EVERYONE,
SAY HELLO.



CHAPTER FIVE

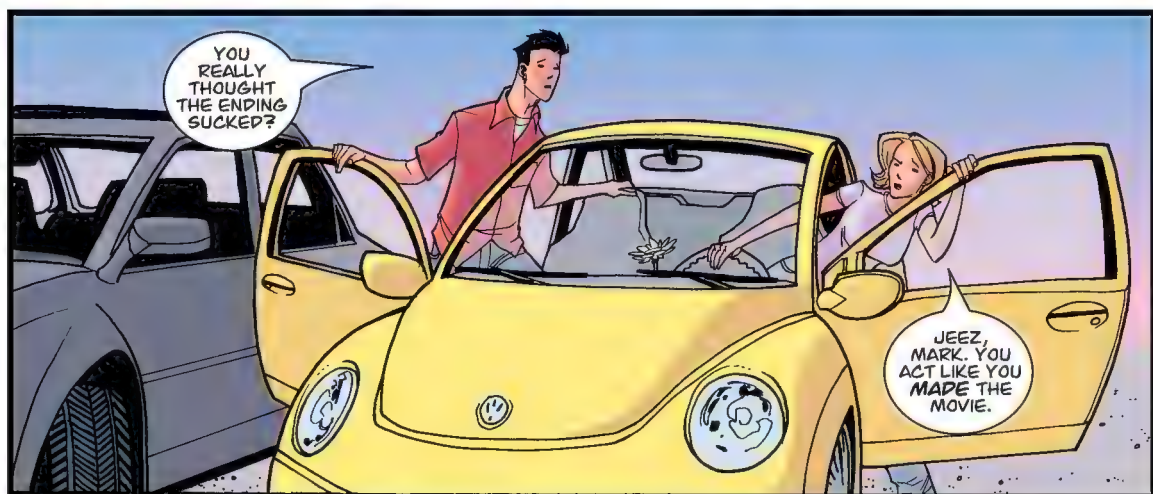


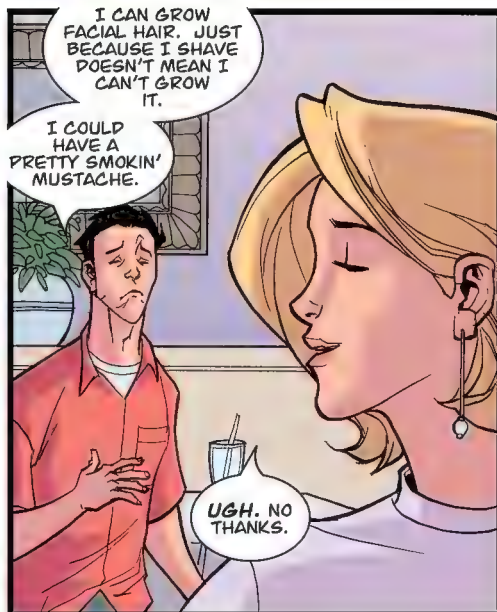
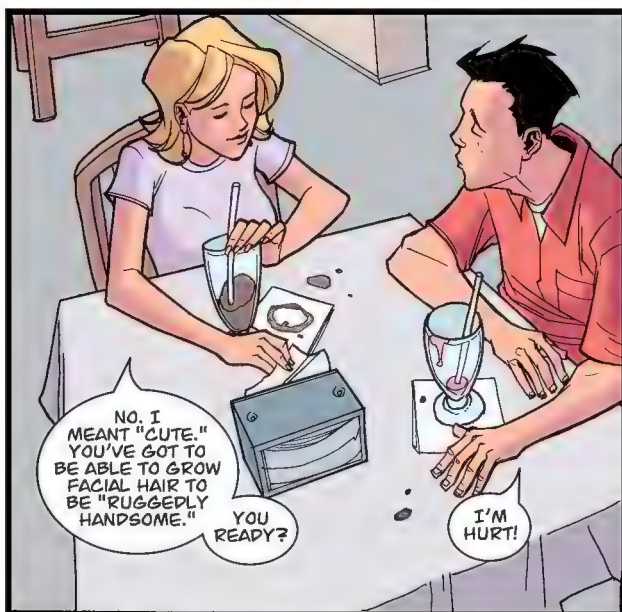
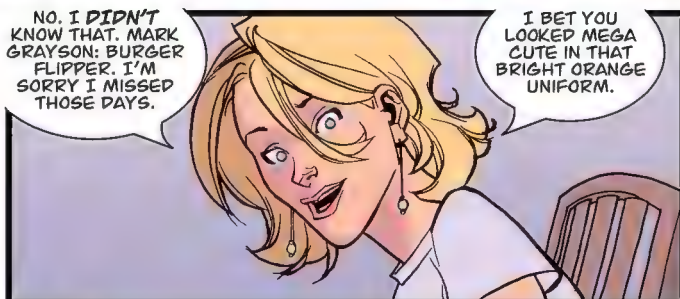
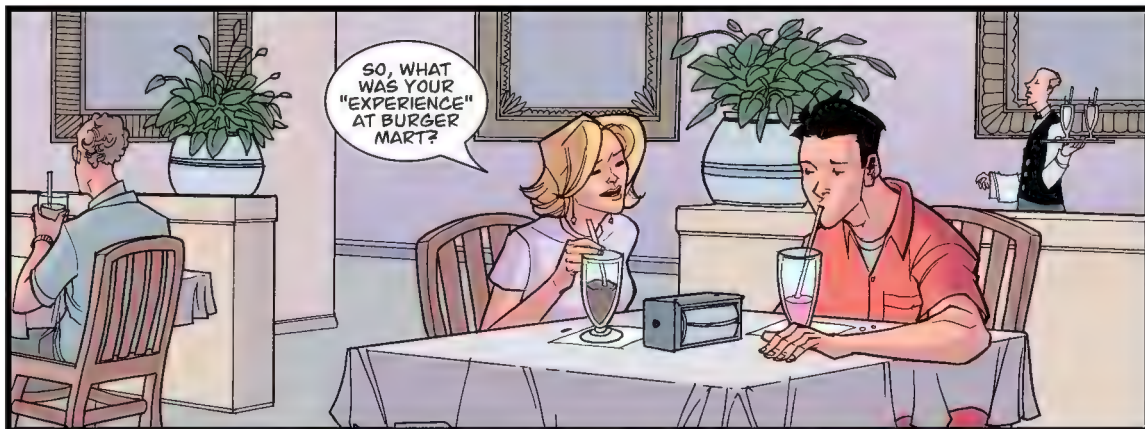


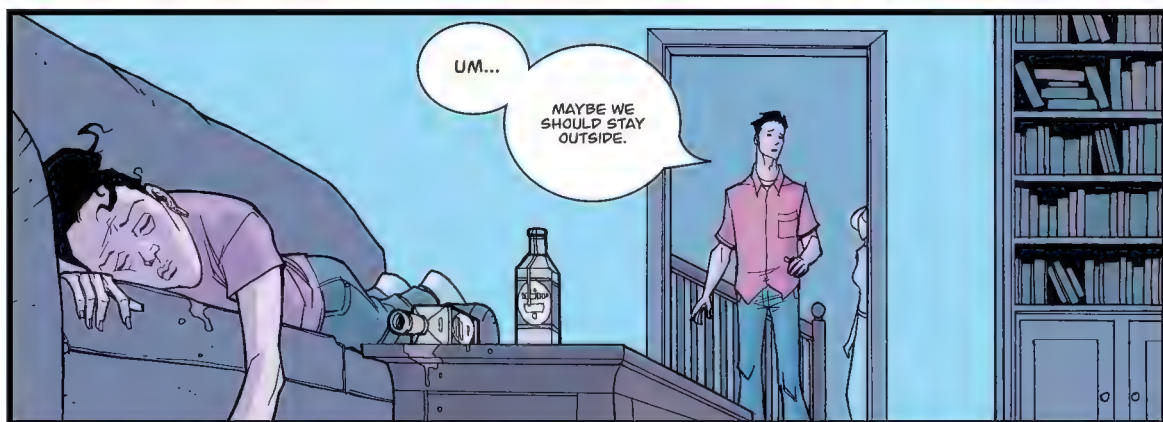
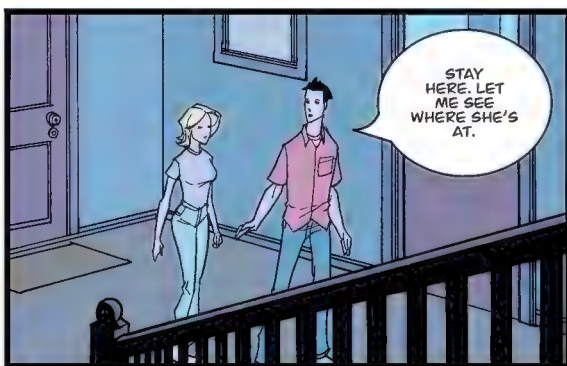
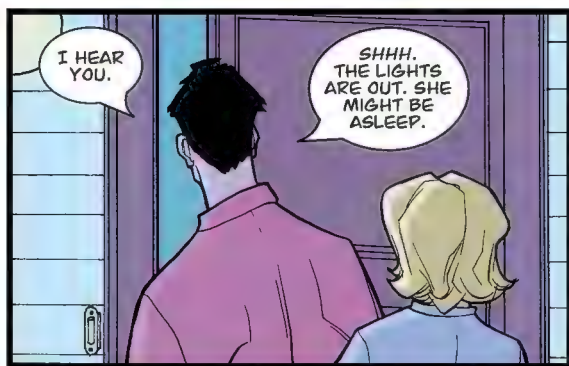
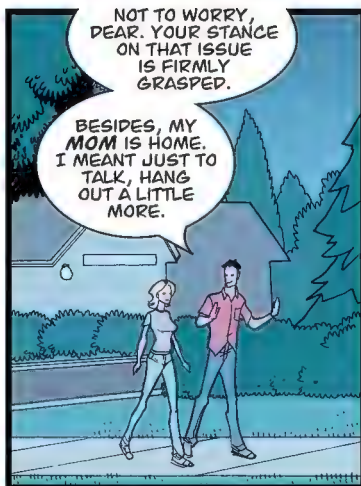
I
LIKED
IT.

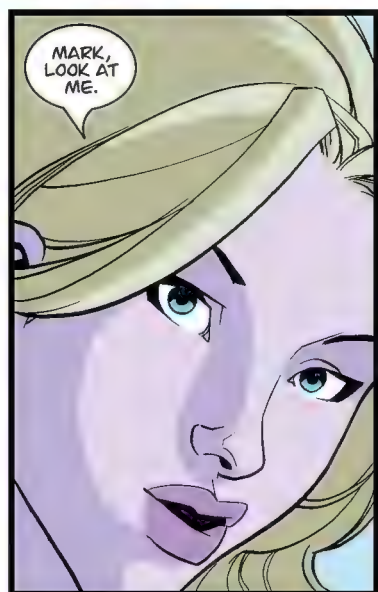
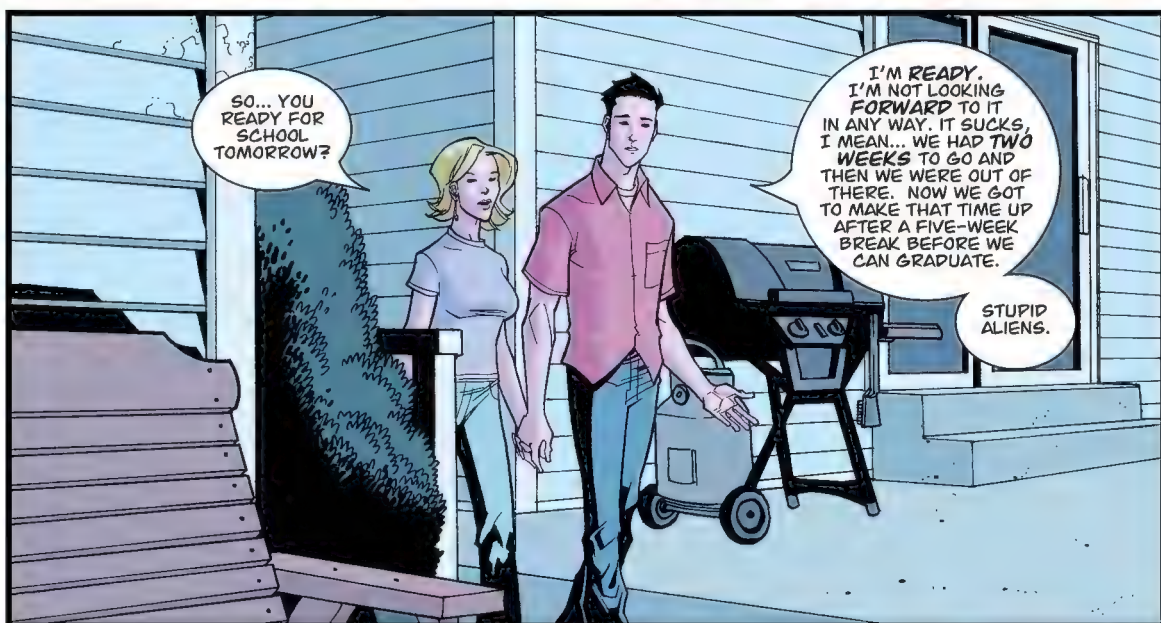
I
THOUGHT
IT WAS
OKAY.

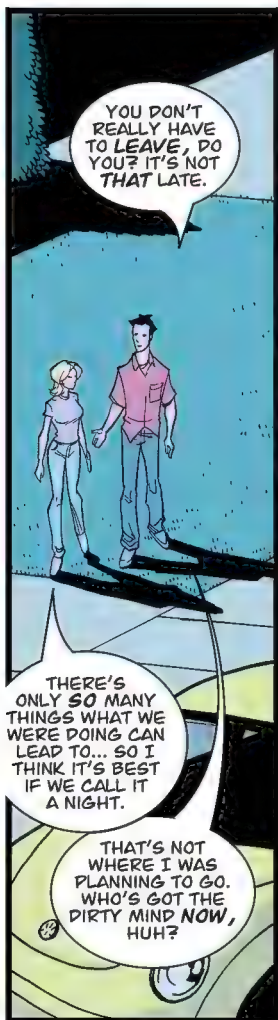
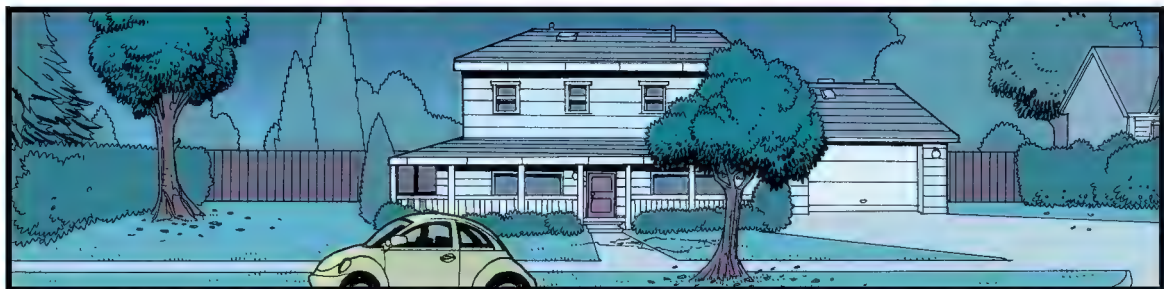
JEEZ, WHEN
ARE THEY GOING
TO BE DONE WITH
ALL THIS CONSTRUCTION?
THEY'VE BEEN WORKING
AROUND THE CLOCK FOR
WEEKS AND IT SEEMS
LIKE THEY HAVEN'T
EVEN SCRATCHED
THE SURFACE!









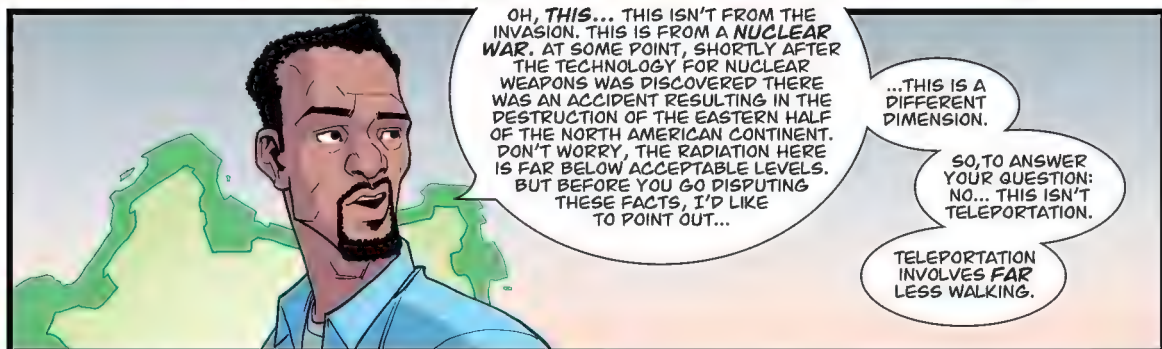






IS THIS
SOME KIND OF
TELEPORTATION?

MY GOD.
WE HEARD OF
THE INVASION WHILE
WE WERE INCARCERATED
BUT WE HAD NO IDEA
THE DAMAGE WAS
THIS SEVERE.

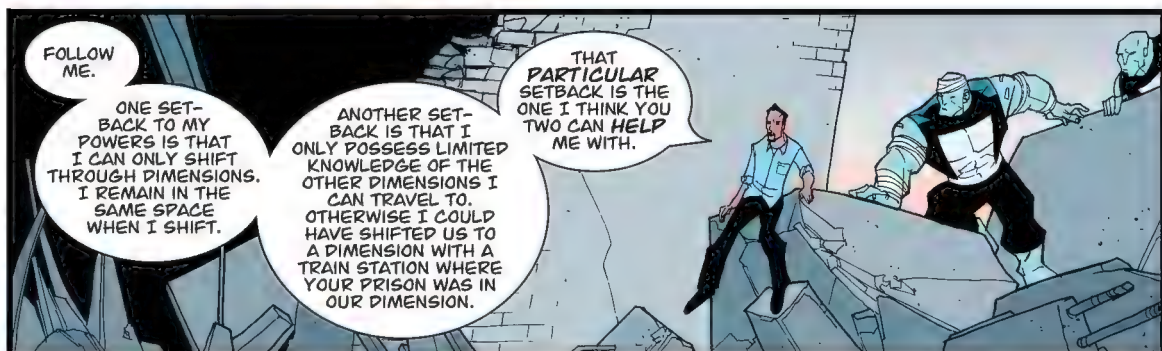


OH, THIS... THIS ISN'T FROM THE
INVASION. THIS IS FROM A **NUCLEAR
WAR**. AT SOME POINT, SHORTLY AFTER
THE TECHNOLOGY FOR NUCLEAR
WEAPONS WAS DISCOVERED THERE
WAS AN ACCIDENT RESULTING IN THE
DESTRUCTION OF THE EASTERN HALF
OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT.
DON'T WORRY, THE RADIATION HERE
IS FAR BELOW ACCEPTABLE LEVELS.
BUT BEFORE YOU GO DISPUTING
THESE FACTS, I'D LIKE
TO POINT OUT...

...THIS IS A
DIFFERENT
DIMENSION.

SO, TO ANSWER
YOUR QUESTION:
NO... THIS ISN'T
TELEPORTATION.

TELEPORTATION
INVOLVES FAR
LESS WALKING.



FOLLOW
ME.

ONE SET-
BACK TO MY
POWERS IS THAT
I CAN ONLY SHIFT
THROUGH DIMENSIONS.
I REMAIN IN THE
SAME SPACE
WHEN I SHIFT.

ANOTHER SET-
BACK IS THAT I
ONLY POSSESS LIMITED
KNOWLEDGE OF THE
OTHER DIMENSIONS I
CAN TRAVEL TO.
OTHERWISE I COULD
HAVE SHIFTED US TO
A TRAIN STATION WHERE
YOUR PRISON WAS IN
OUR DIMENSION.

THAT
PARTICULAR
SETBACK IS THE
ONE I THINK YOU
TWO CAN HELP
ME WITH.



WHAT'S
IN IT FOR
US?

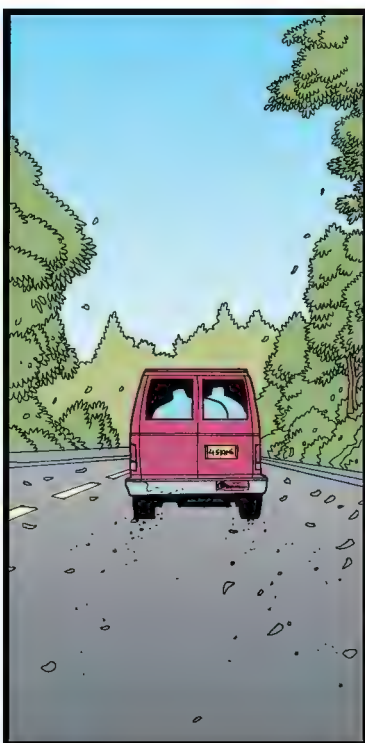
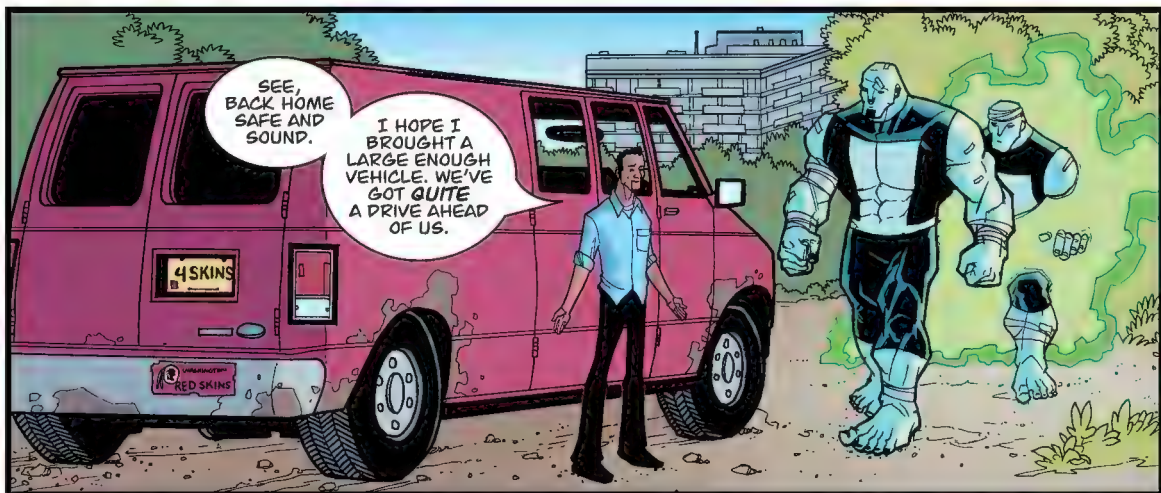


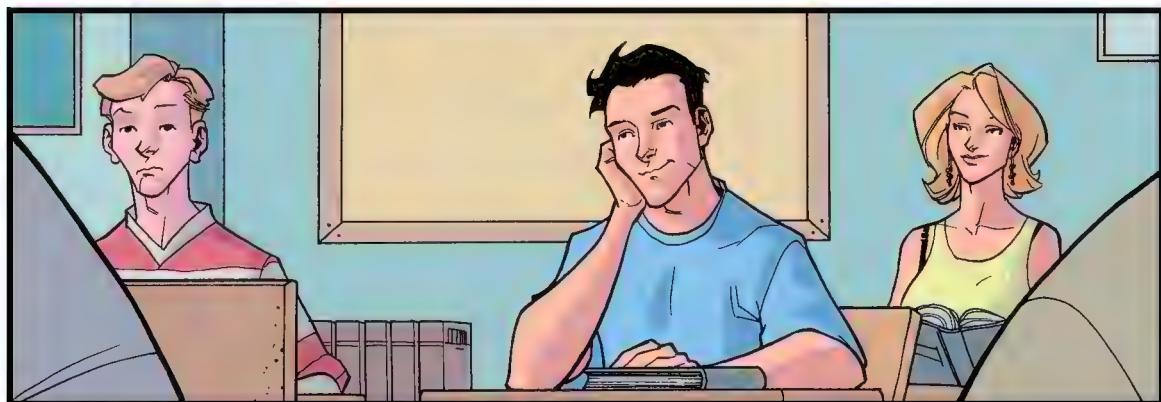
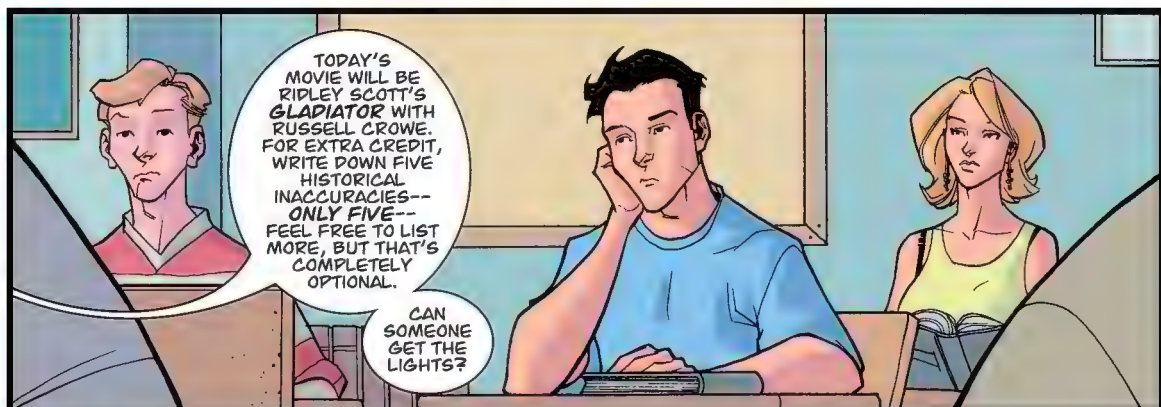
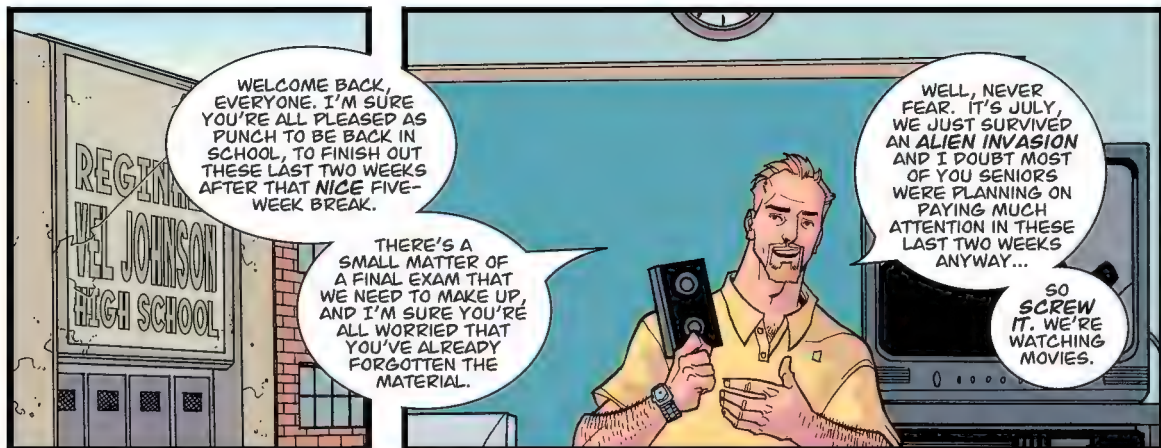
I HAD ASSUMED
YOUR FREEDOM WOULD
BE ENOUGH, BUT I CAN
ALWAYS THREATEN TO
LEAVE YOU IN THIS
DIMENSION IF YOU NEED
ADDED INCENTIVE.

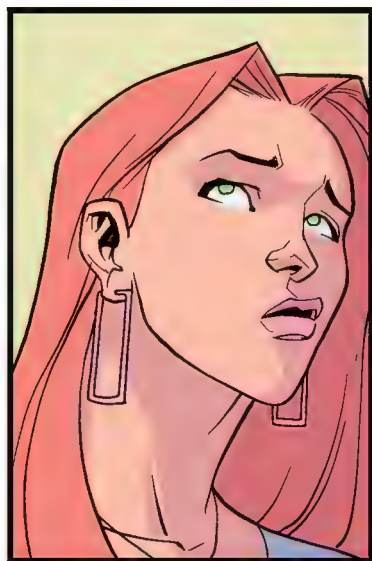
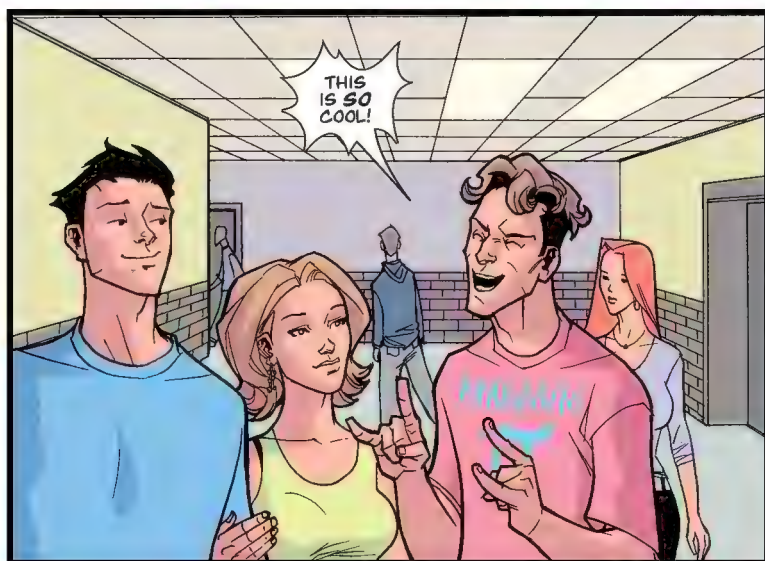
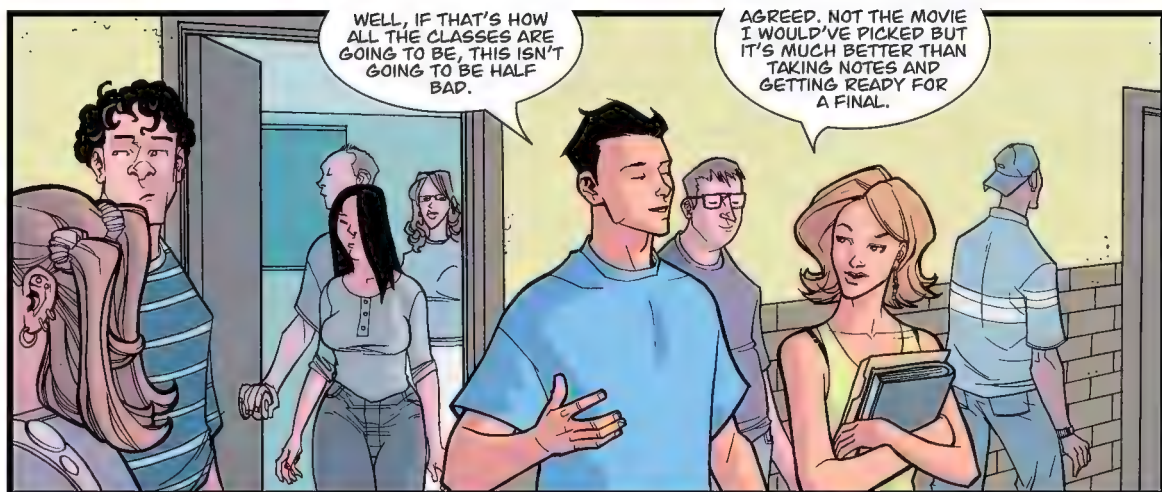


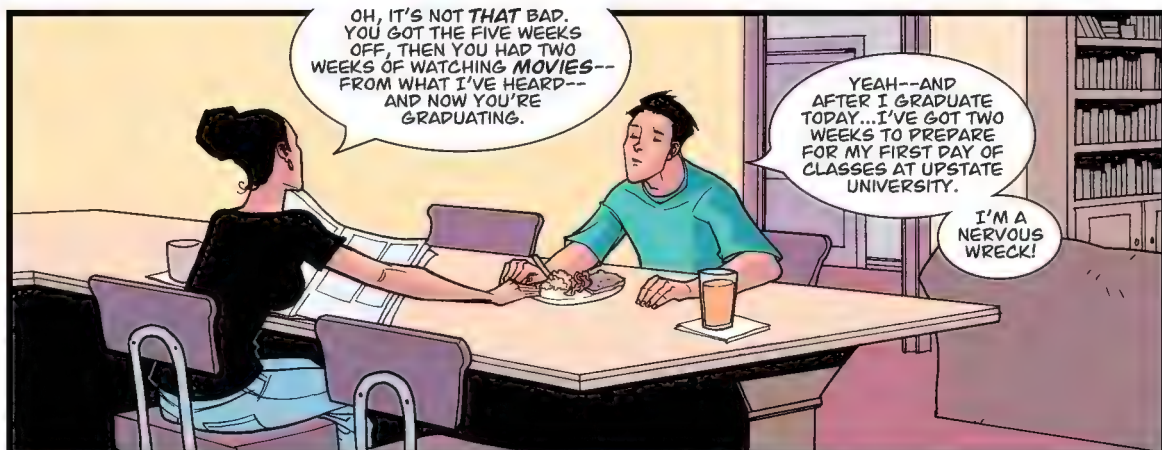
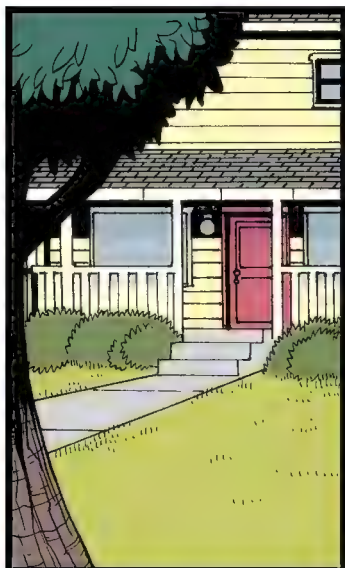
POINT
TAKEN.

OUR
SERVICES
ARE
YOURS.

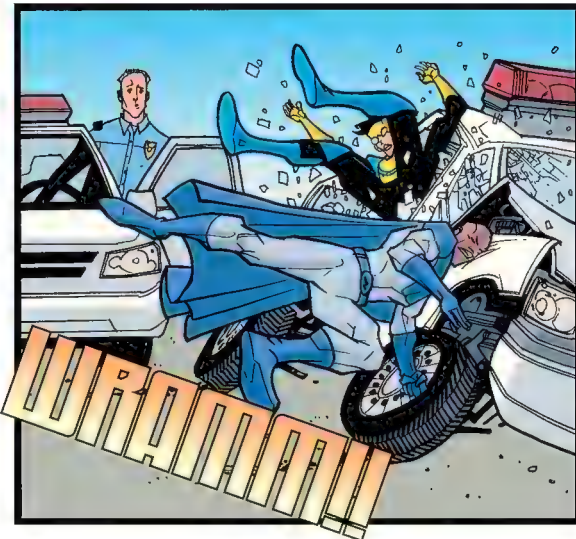
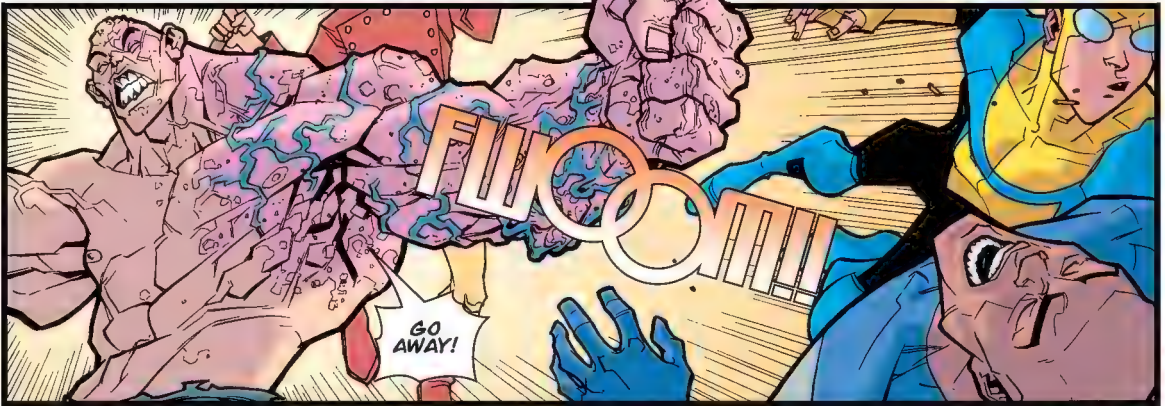
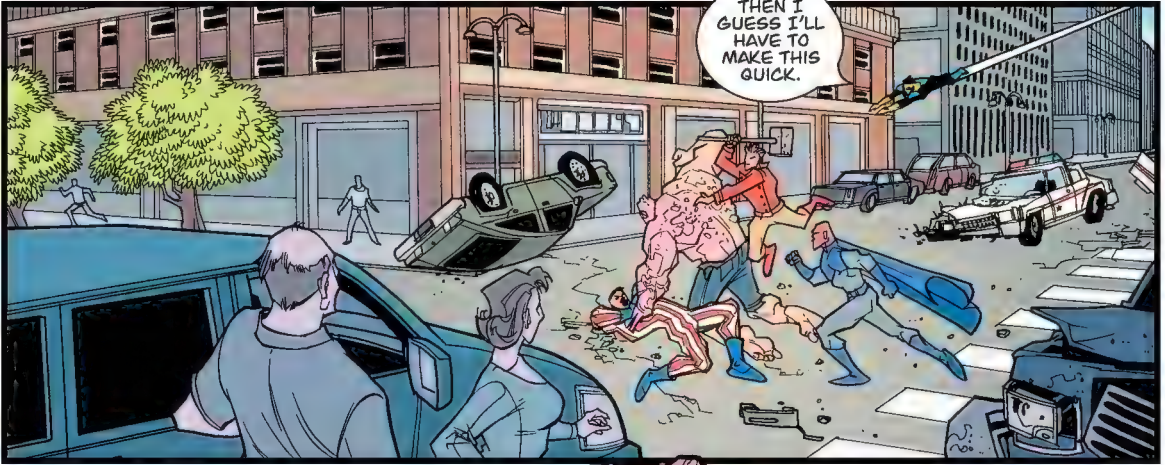
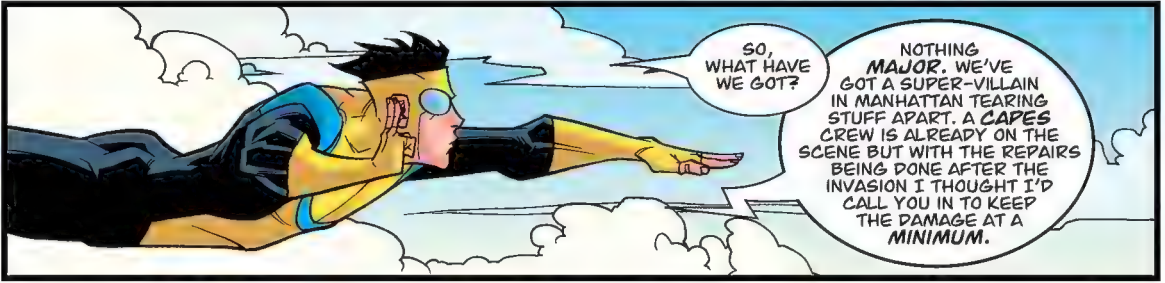












THAT'S THOMAS WINTERS. A LAB ACCIDENT CAUSED HIS WIFE, HOLLY, TO BECOME IMMORTAL. AFTER YEARS OF DEALING WITH IT HE DECIDED TO TRY AND DUPLICATE THE EXPERIMENT SO THAT THEY COULD LIVE TOGETHER FOREVER.

SOMETHING WENT WRONG.

HIS CELLS REGENERATE-- BUT AT SUCH A RAPID LEVEL THAT IT'S AFFECTED HIS THOUGHT PROCESSES AND BEHAVIOR. NOW HE'S SUPER STRONG, INDESTRUCTIBLE, AND HE KILLS ANY MAN THAT SO MUCH AS LOOKS AT HOLLY.

WHY'S HE BEATING ON THAT GUY? DOESN'T HE WORK AT CAPES?

YEAH, COMMANDER CAPITALISM HAS BEEN DATING HOLLY FOR ABOUT TWO MONTHS.











YOU DID GOOD OUT THERE, KID. IF YOU EVER WANT HEALTH CARE AND OVERTIME PAY FOR WHAT YOU'RE ALREADY DOING--GIVE US A CALL.

I'LL KEEP THAT IN MIND, SIR.



OH, PHILLIP! BABY! ARE YOU OKAY?!!

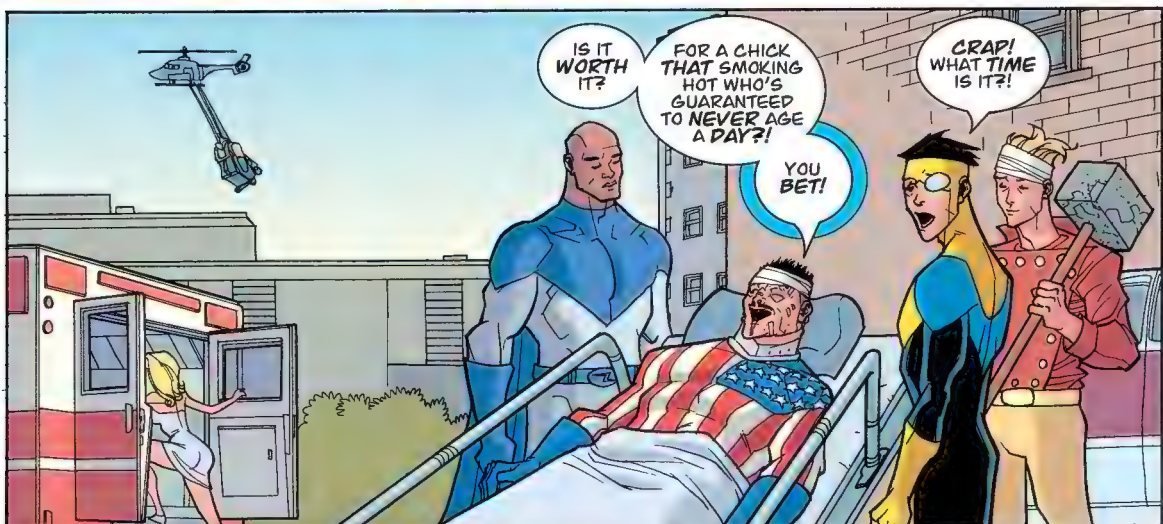


IT'S NOT AS BAD AS IT LOOKS, HOLLY. YOUR EX AIN'T SO TOUGH. YOU GO WAIT IN THE AMBULANCE, HONEY. YOU CAN RIDE WITH ME TO THE HOSPITAL.



I LIKE TO WATCH HER COMING, BUT I LOVE TO WATCH HER WALK AWAY. SO FINE, AND ALL MINE.

YEAH-- BUT IS IT WORTH ALL THIS?

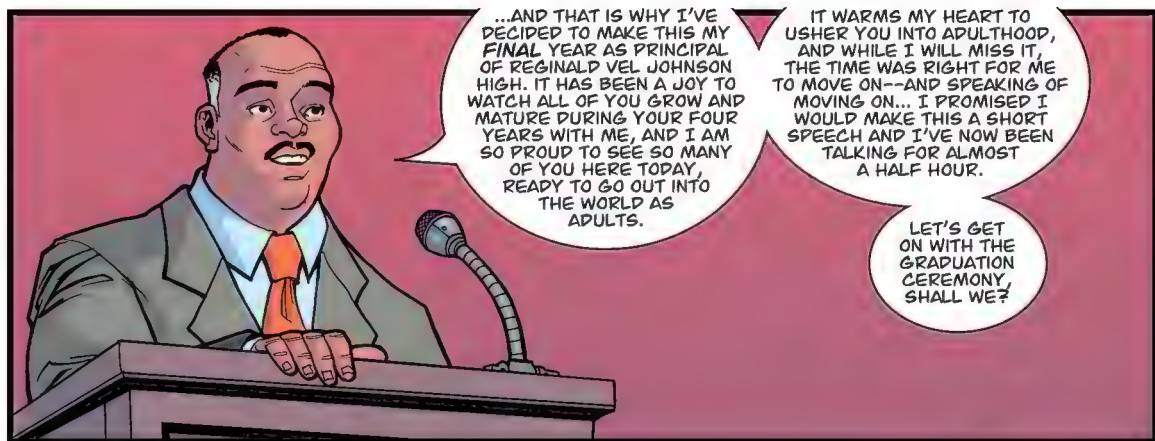


IS IT WORTH IT?

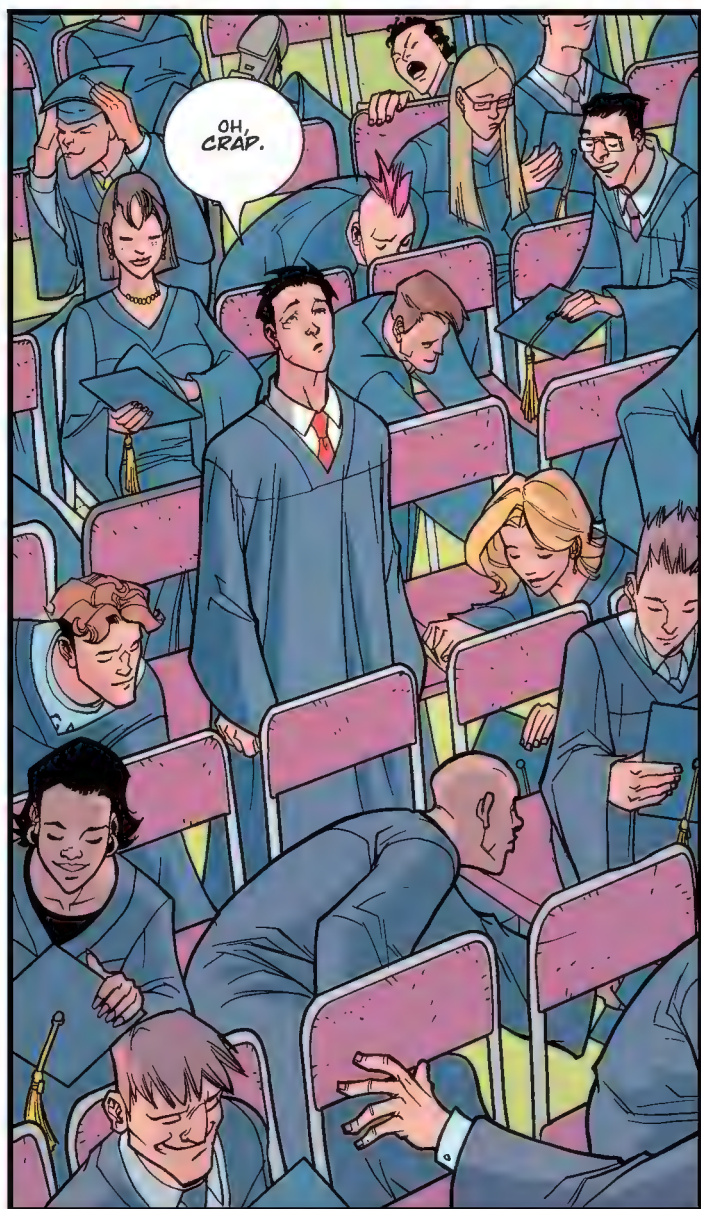
FOR A CHICK THAT SMOKING HOT WHO'S GUARANTEED TO NEVER AGE A DAY?!

YOU BET!

CRAP! WHAT TIME IS IT?!

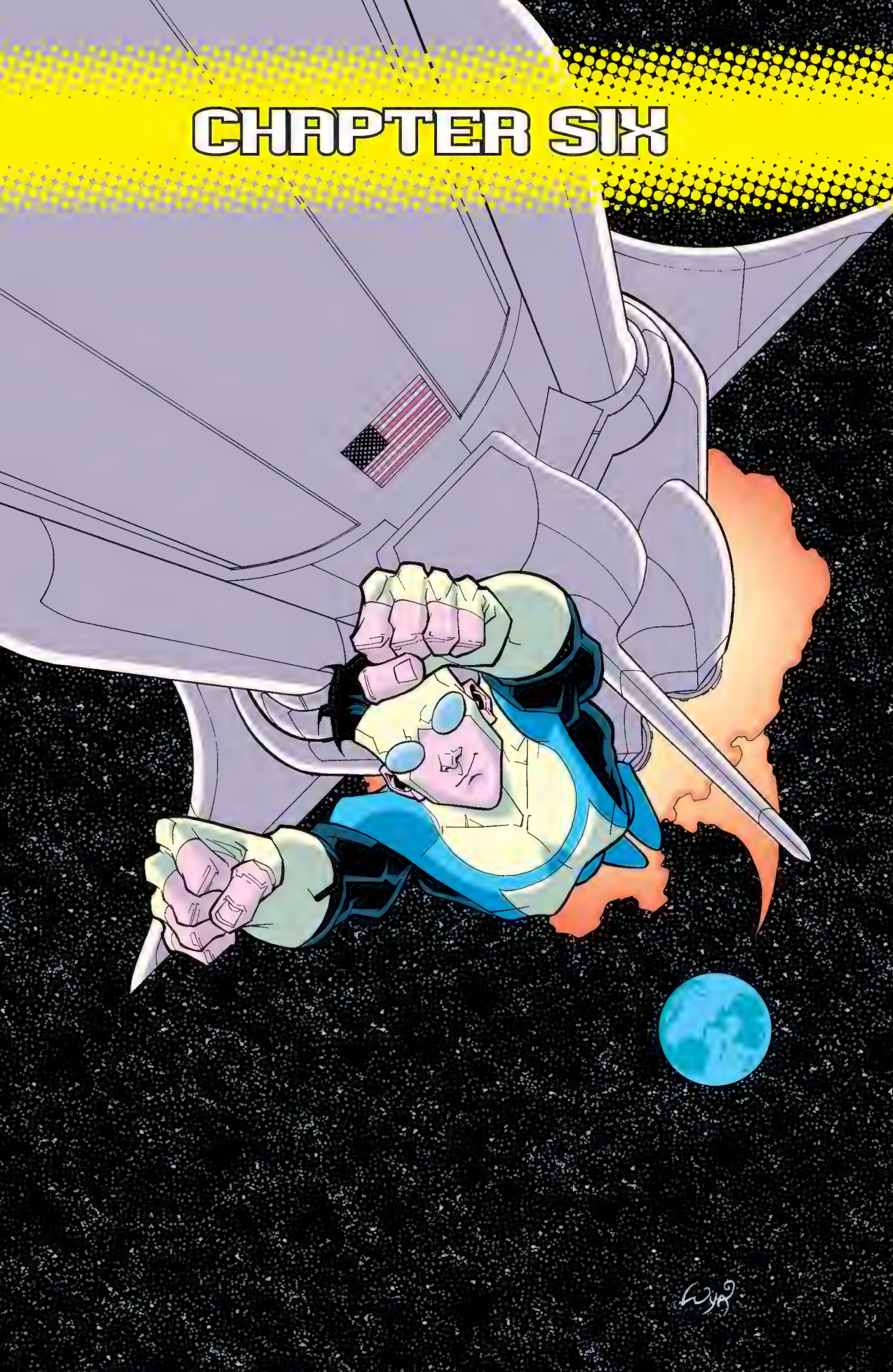








CHAPTER SIX

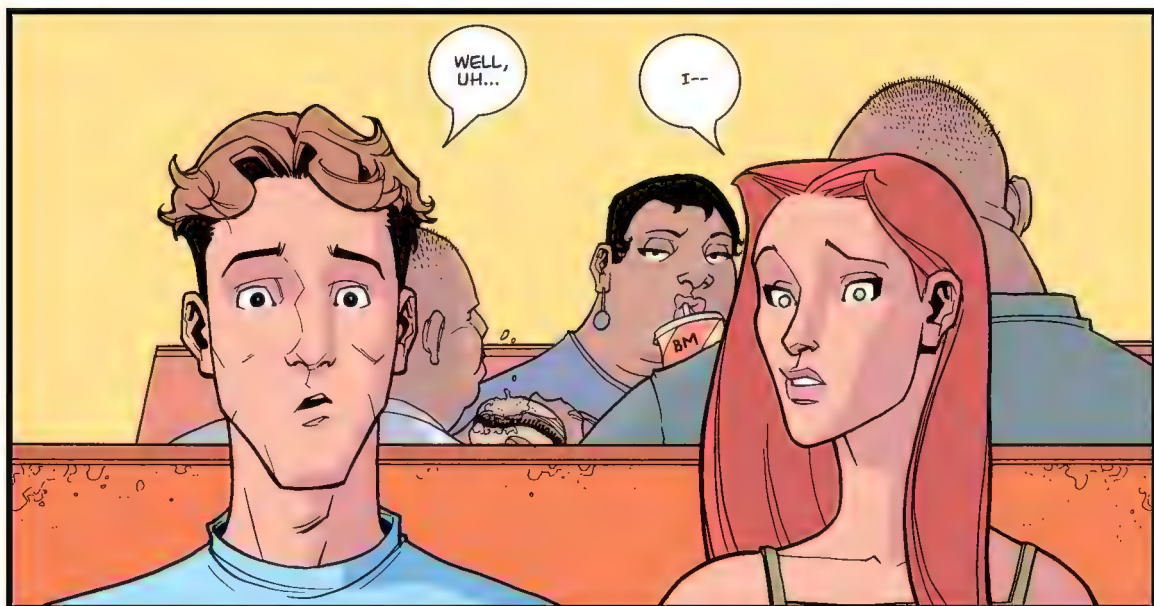
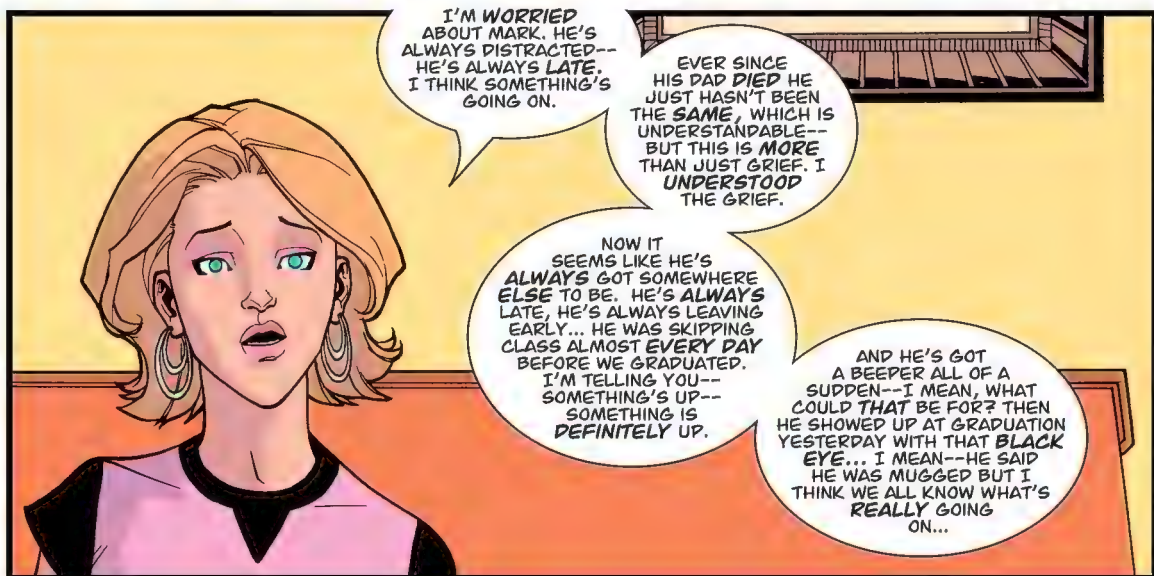
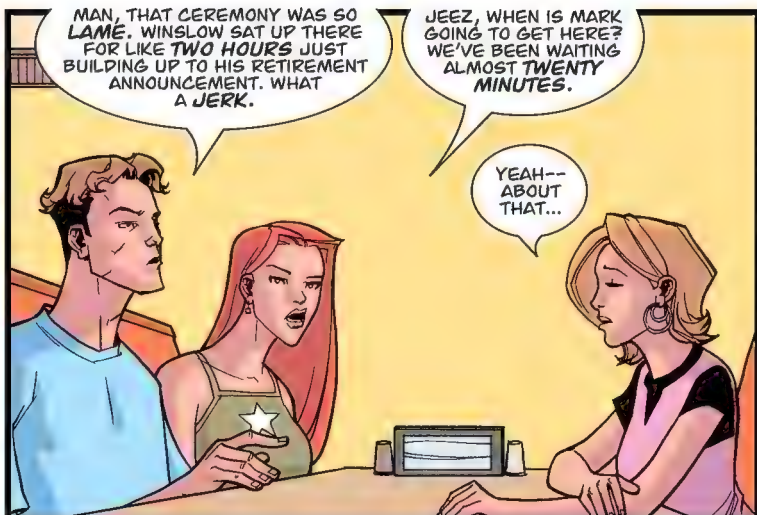


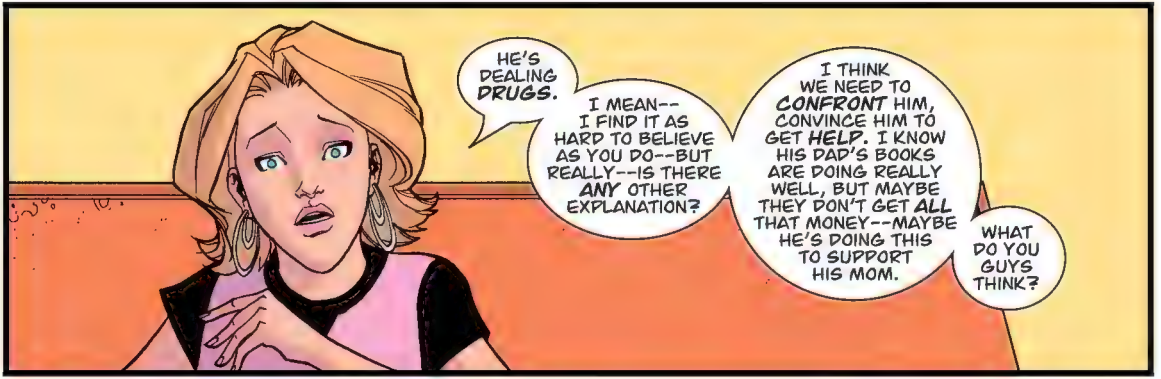
W3182

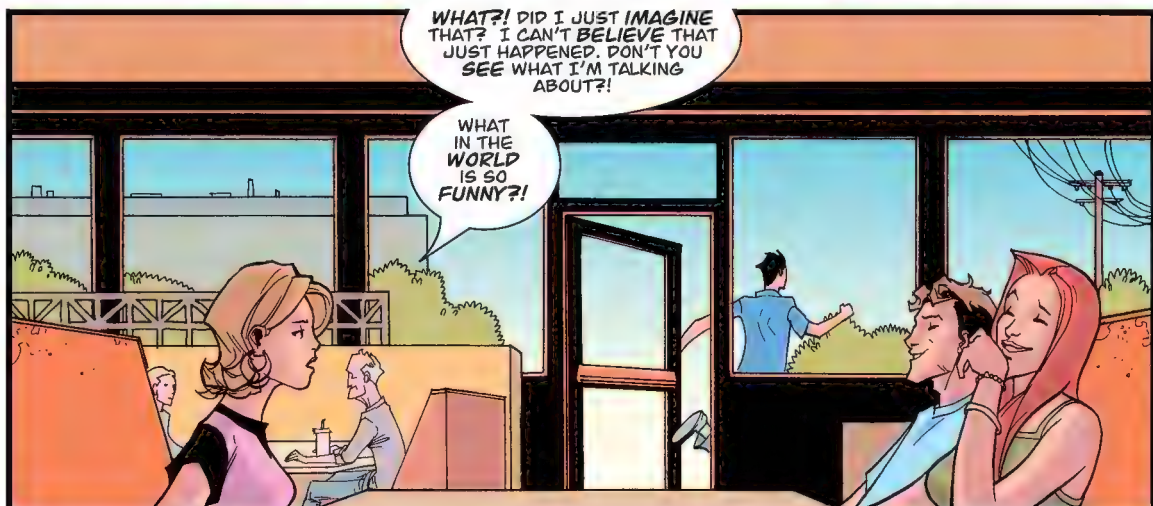
DON'T BE
SCARED--I'M
GOOD, I'M NOT TIRED
OR ANYTHING. YOU'VE
GOT SOME TIME, GATHER
UP YOUR THINGS, TOYS,
FAMILY PHOTOS--
WHATEVER.

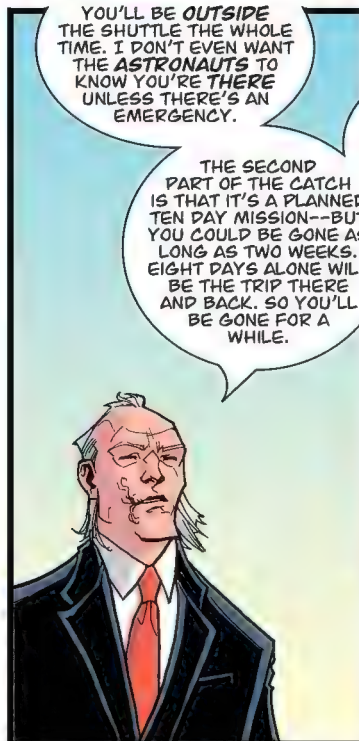
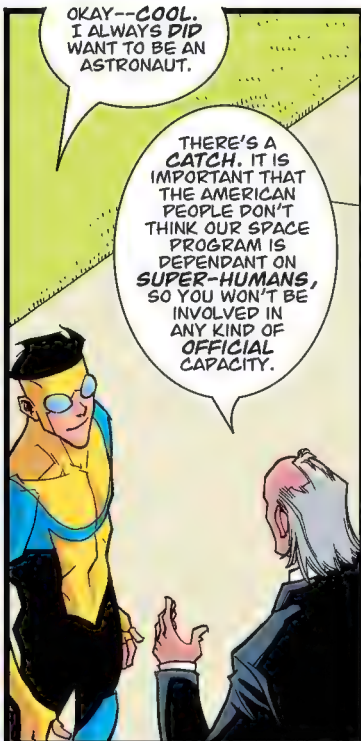
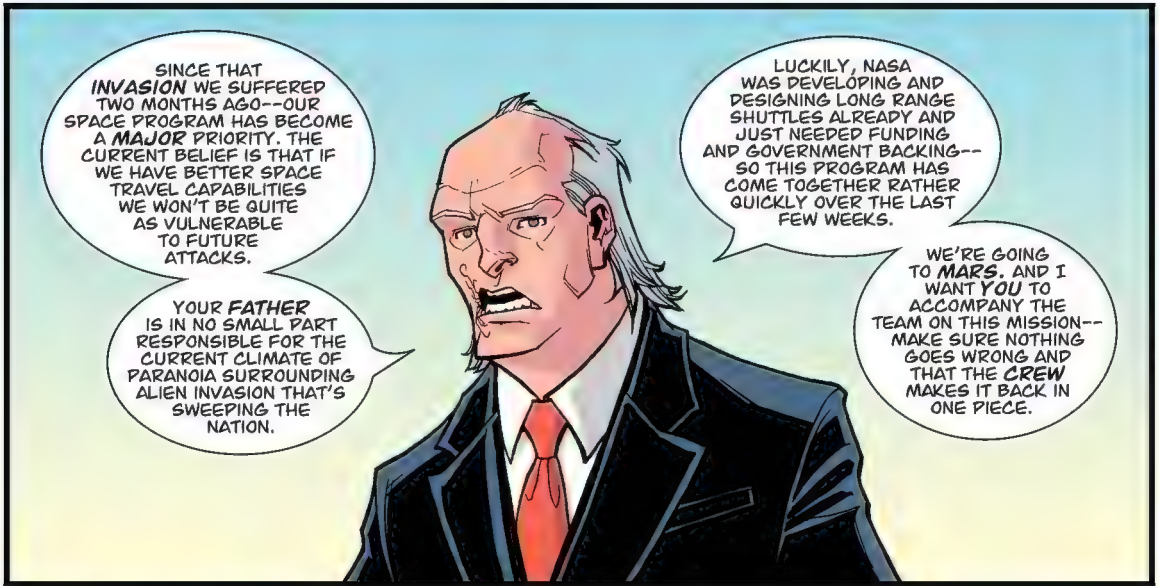
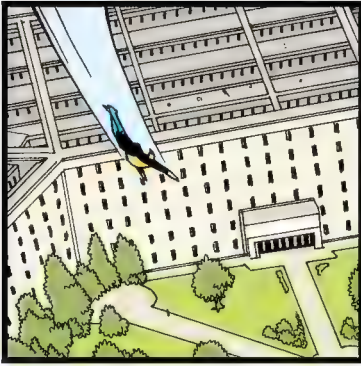
JUST BE
QUICK ABOUT IT.
I DON'T KNOW
HOW LONG THIS
STUFF WILL HOLD
BEFORE IT STARTS
BREAKING
APART.



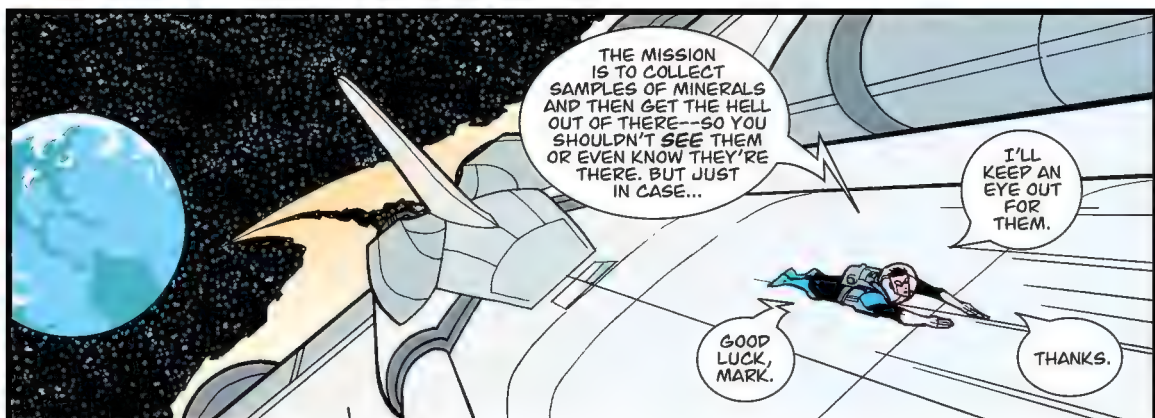
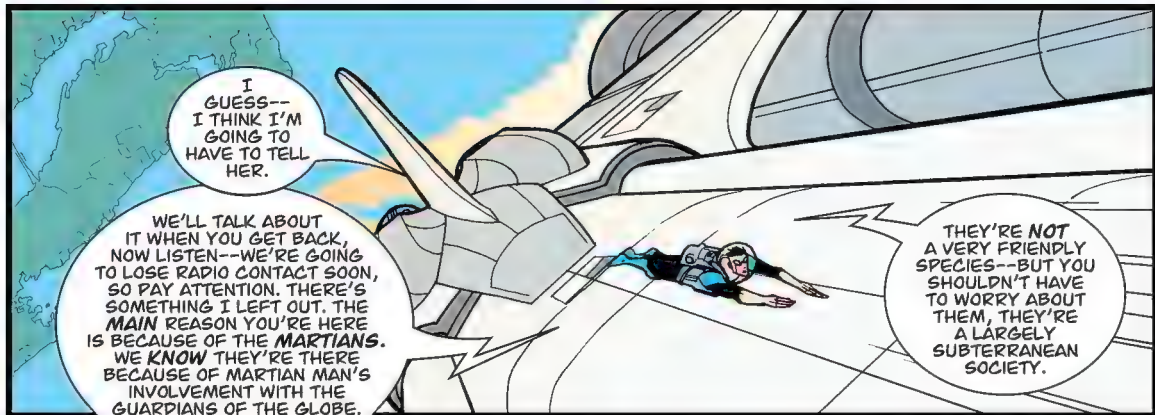
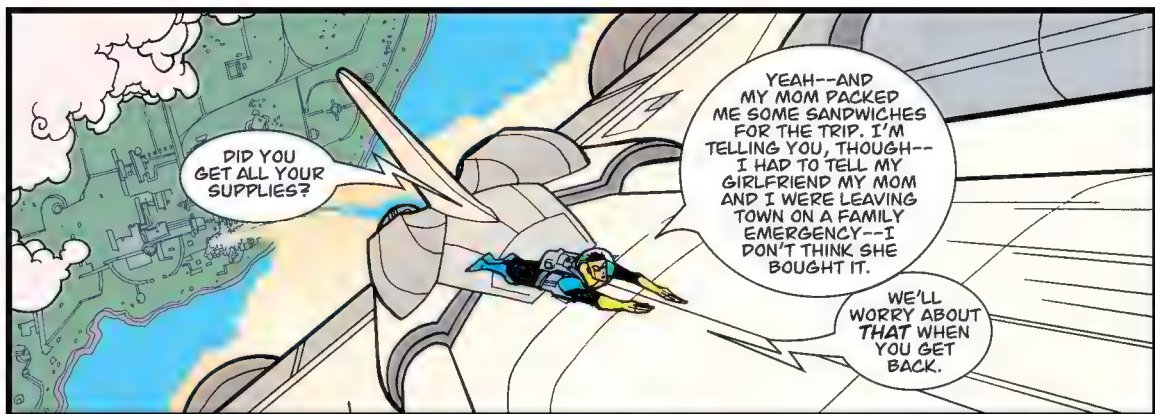
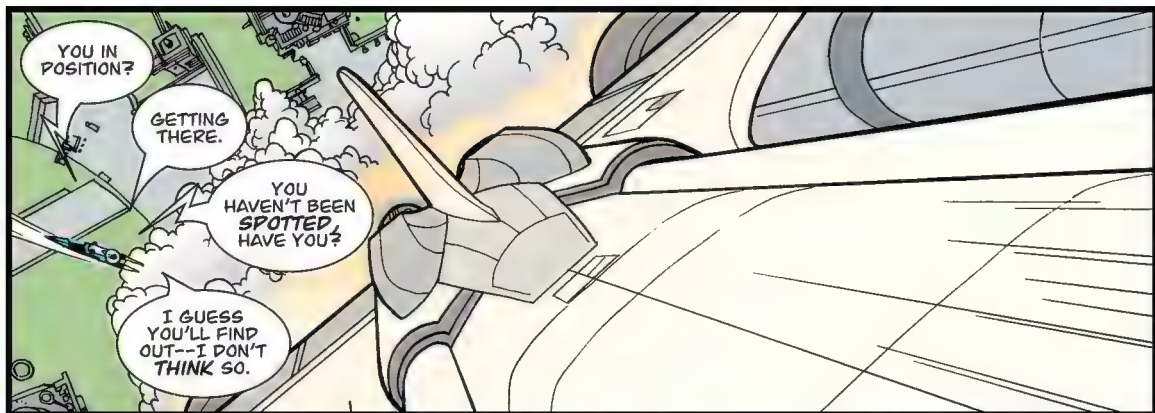


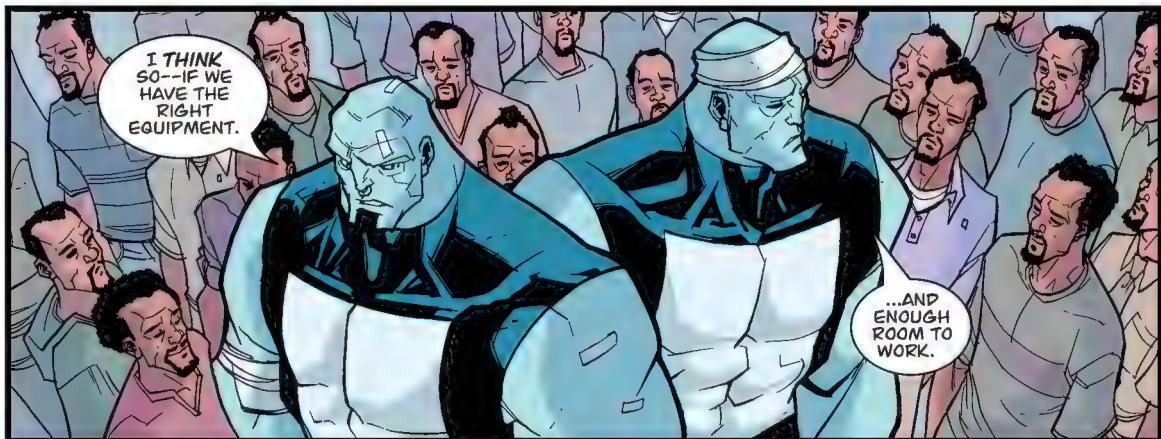
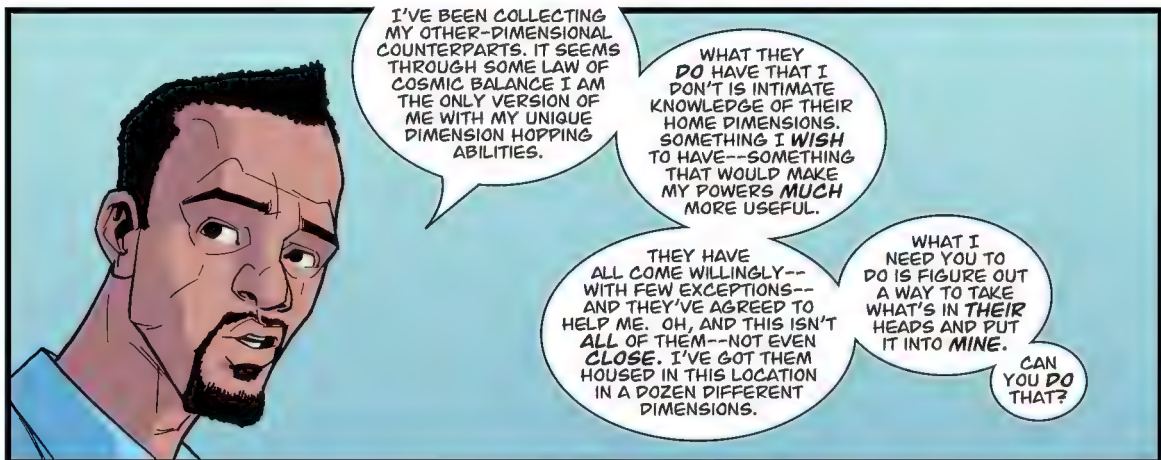
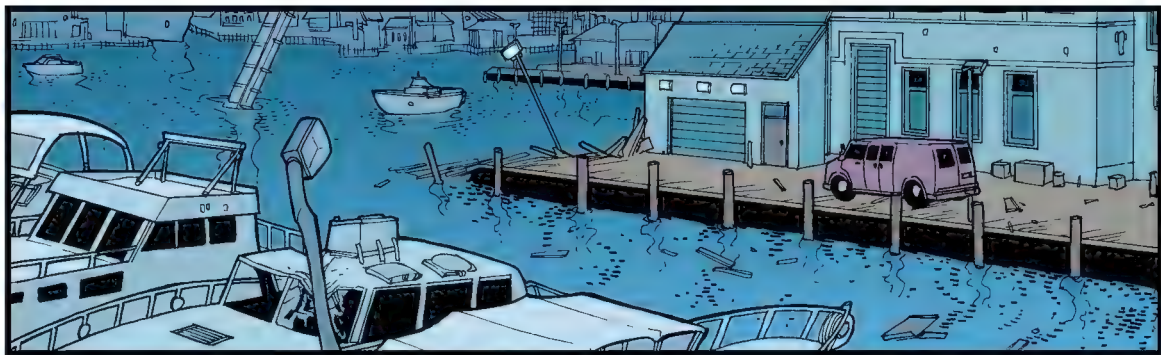


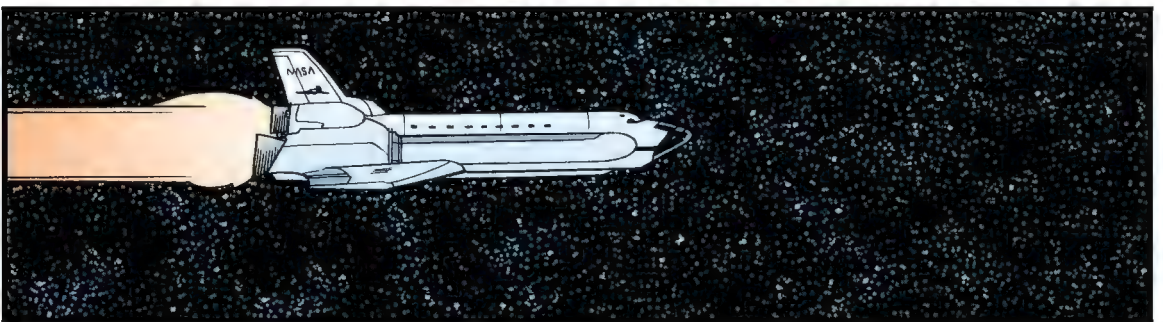
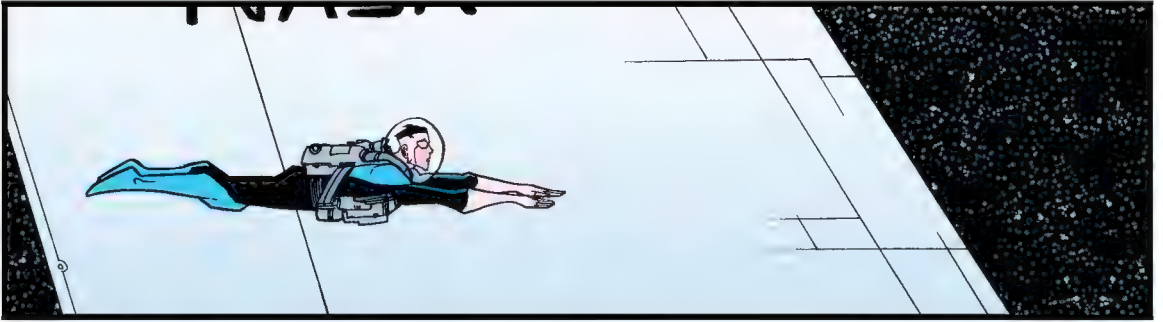
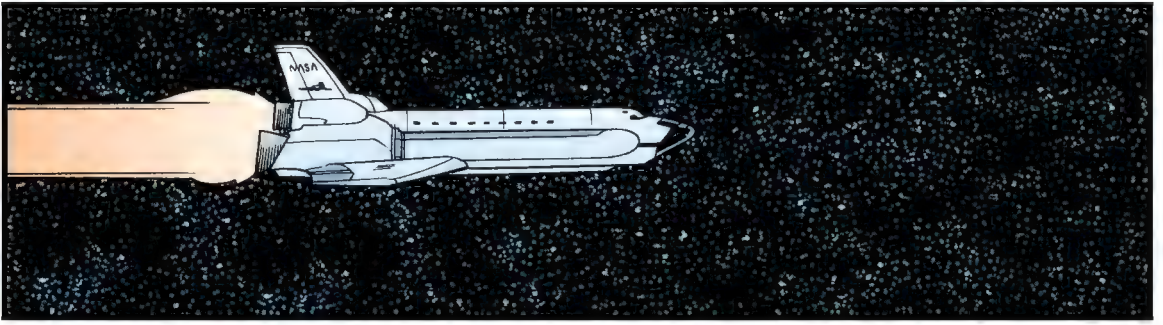


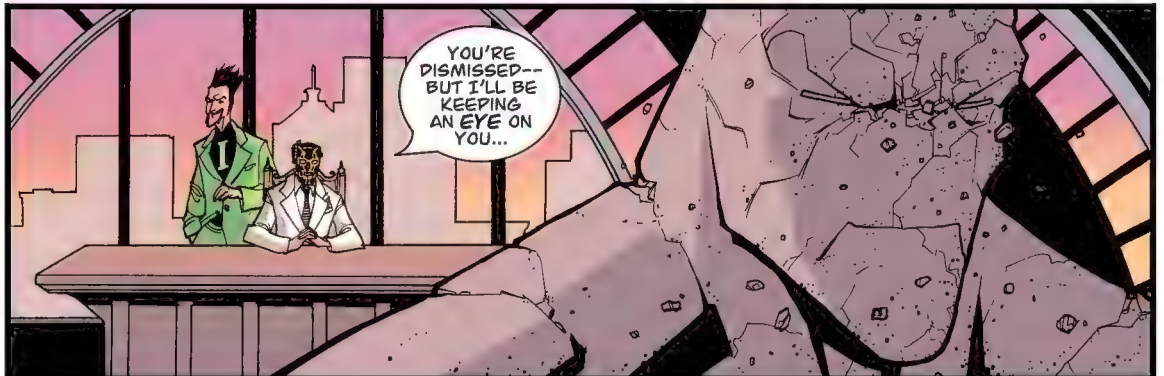
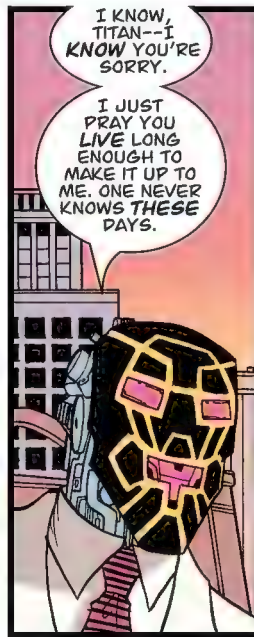
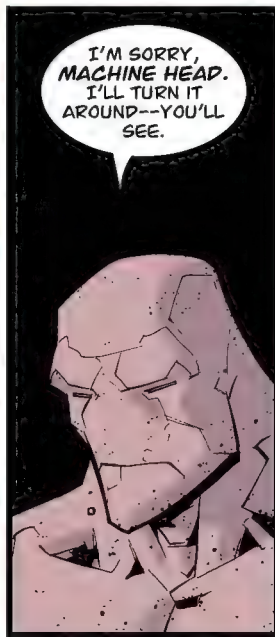


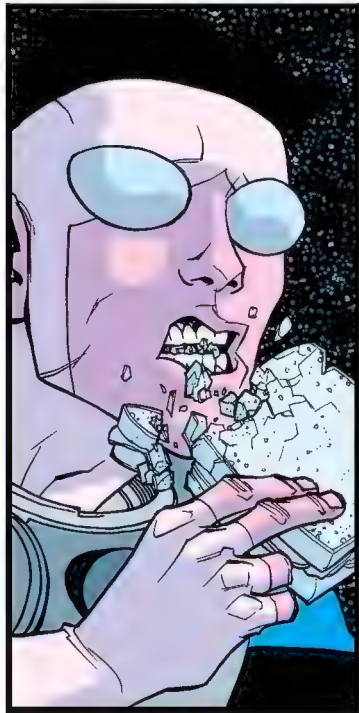
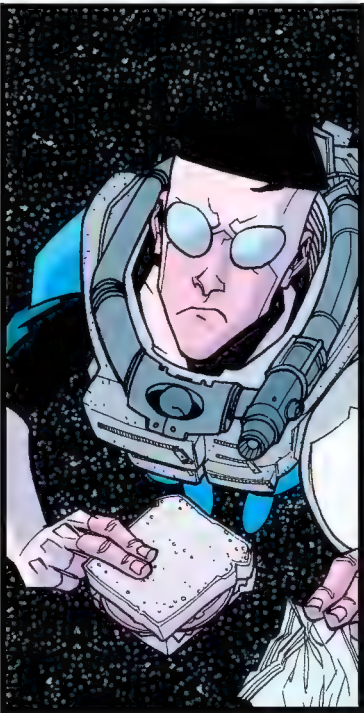
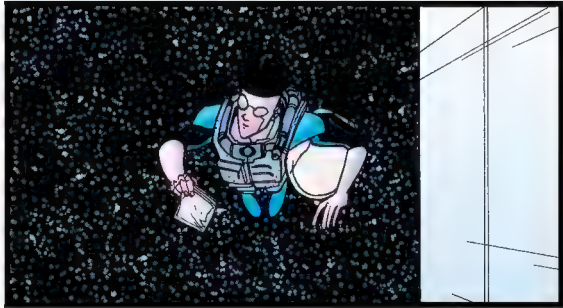
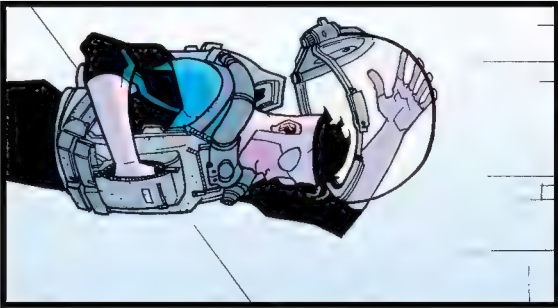




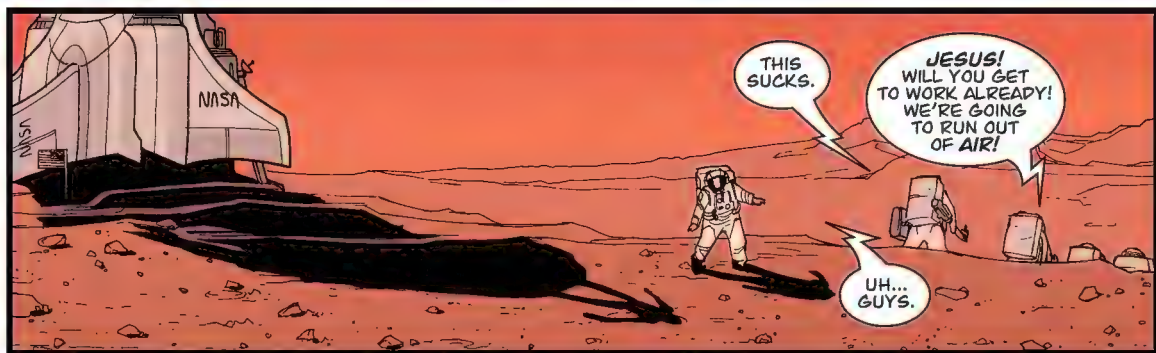


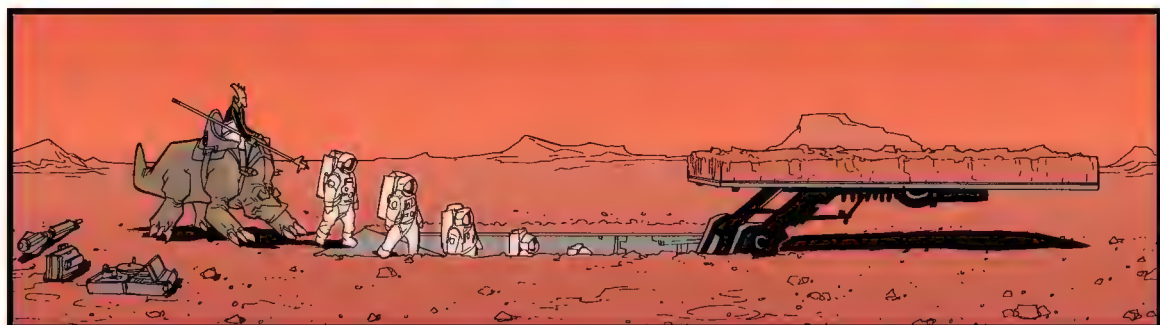
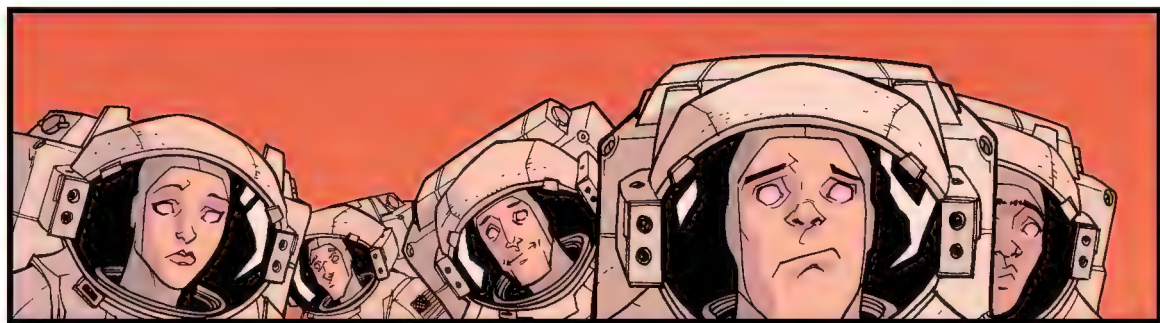


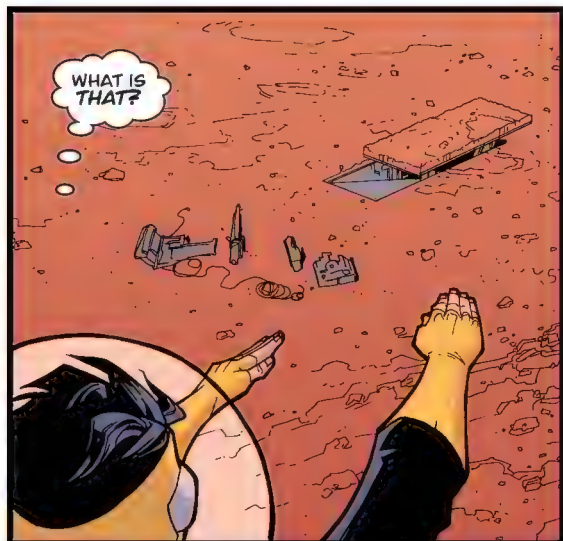


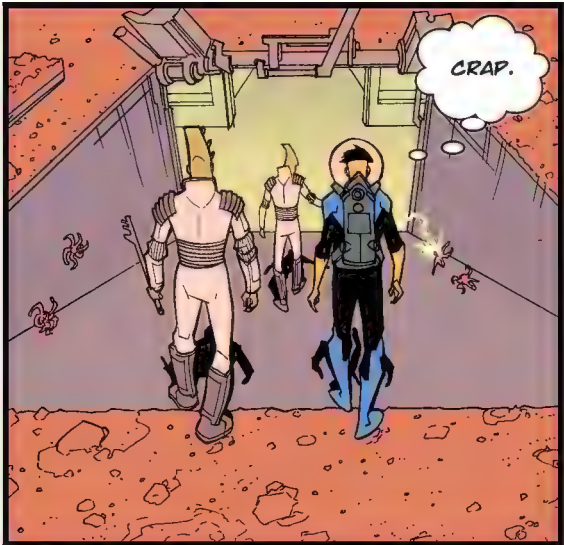
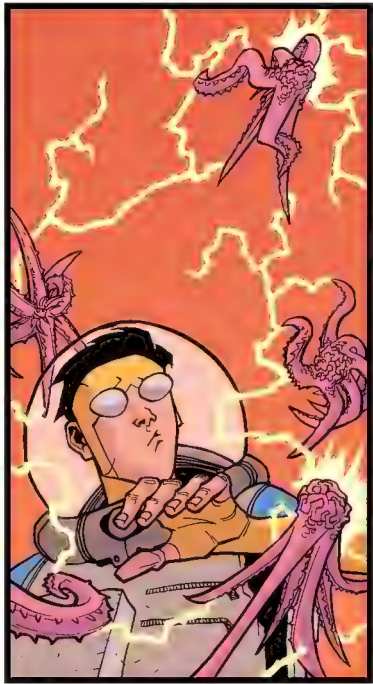
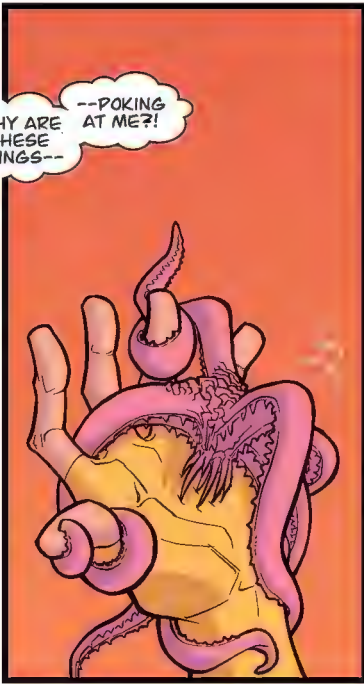
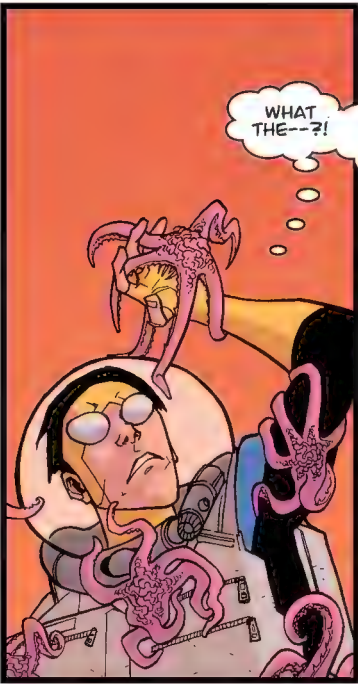


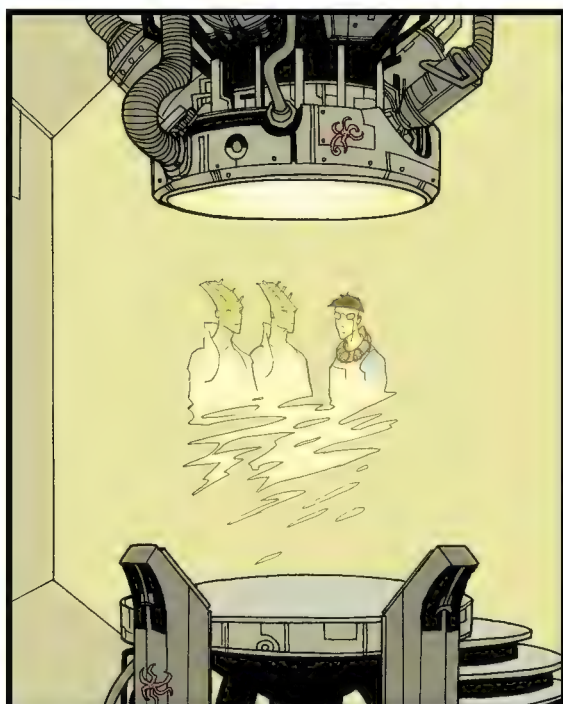
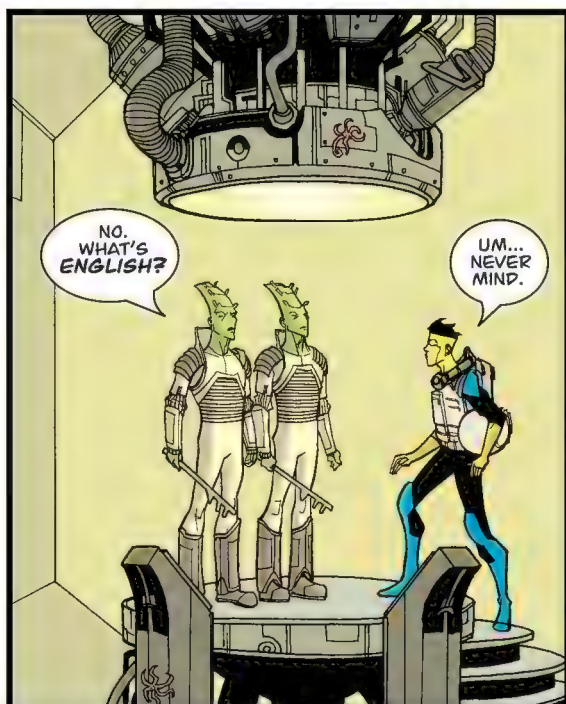
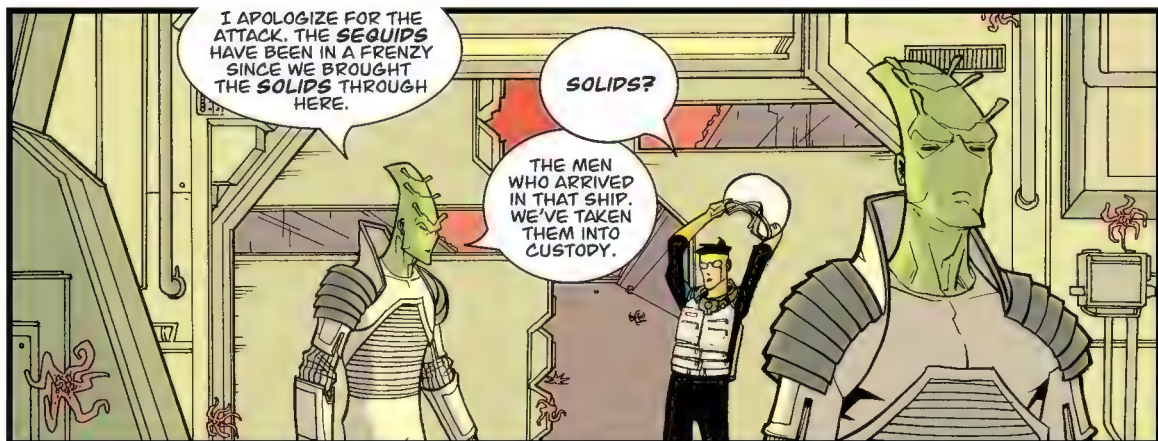


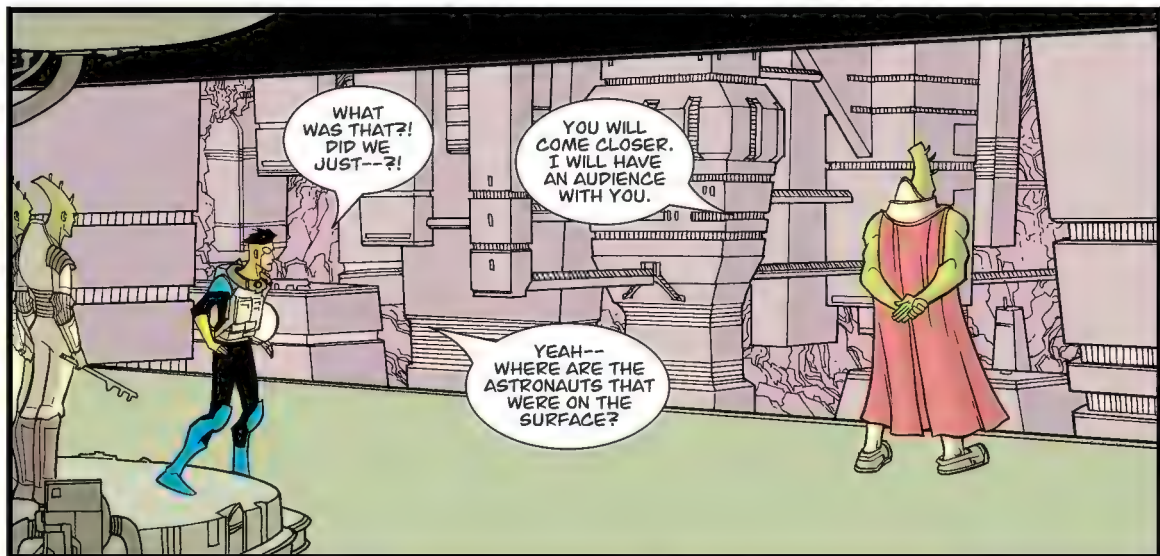








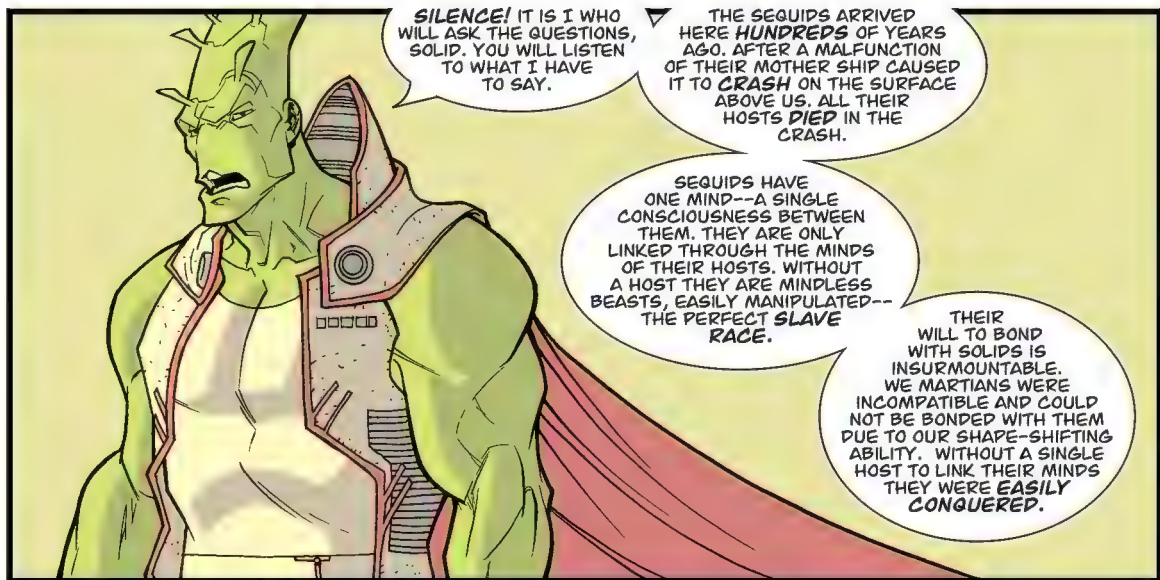




WHAT WAS THAT?! DID WE JUST--?!

YOU WILL COME CLOSER. I WILL HAVE AN AUDIENCE WITH YOU.

YEAH-- WHERE ARE THE ASTRONAUTS THAT WERE ON THE SURFACE?

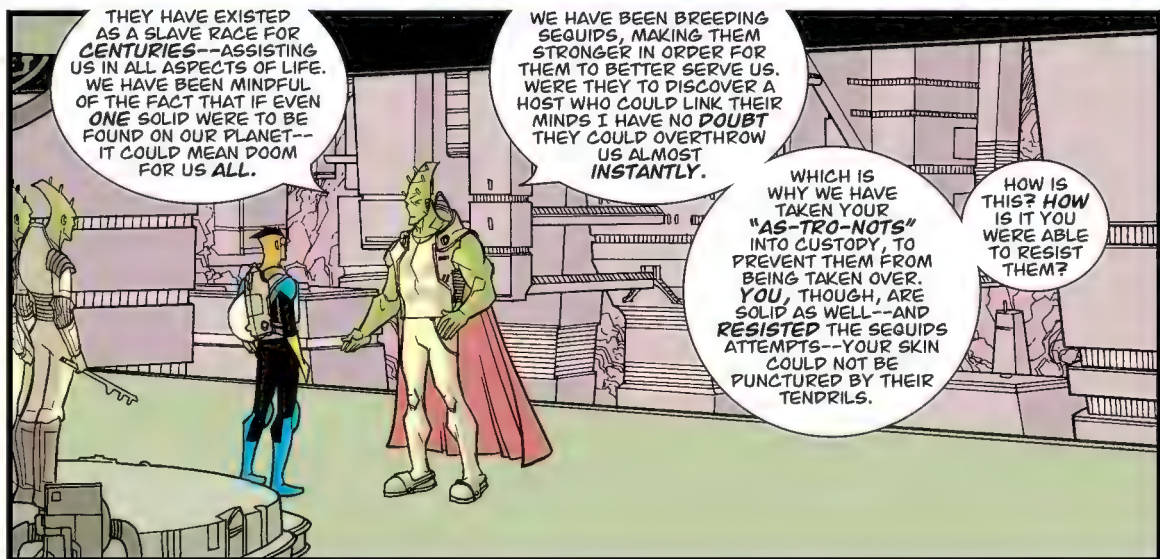


SILENCE! IT IS I WHO WILL ASK THE QUESTIONS, SOLID. YOU WILL LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.

THE SEQUIDS ARRIVED HERE **HUNDREDS** OF YEARS AGO. AFTER A MALFUNCTION OF THEIR MOTHER SHIP CAUSED IT TO **CRASH** ON THE SURFACE ABOVE US. ALL THEIR HOSTS **DIED** IN THE CRASH.

SEQUIDS HAVE ONE MIND--A SINGLE CONSCIOUSNESS BETWEEN THEM. THEY ARE ONLY LINKED THROUGH THE MINDS OF THEIR HOSTS. WITHOUT A HOST THEY ARE MINDLESS BEASTS, EASILY MANIPULATED-- THE PERFECT SLAVE RACE.

THEIR WILL TO BOND WITH SOLIDS IS INSURMOUNTABLE. WE MARTIANS WERE INCOMPATIBLE AND COULD NOT BE BONDED WITH THEM DUE TO OUR SHAPE-SHIFTING ABILITY. WITHOUT A SINGLE HOST TO LINK THEIR MINDS THEY WERE EASILY CONQUERED.



THEY HAVE EXISTED AS A SLAVE RACE FOR **CENTURIES**--ASSISTING US IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE. WE HAVE BEEN MINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT IF EVEN **ONE** SOLID WERE TO BE FOUND ON OUR PLANET-- IT COULD MEAN DOOM FOR US ALL.

WE HAVE BEEN BREEDING SEQUIDS, MAKING THEM STRONGER IN ORDER FOR THEM TO BETTER SERVE US. WERE THEY TO DISCOVER A HOST WHO COULD LINK THEIR MINDS I HAVE NO **DOUBT** THEY COULD OVERTHROW US ALMOST INSTANTLY.

WHICH IS WHY WE HAVE TAKEN YOUR "**AS-TRO-NOTS**" INTO CUSTODY, TO PREVENT THEM FROM BEING TAKEN OVER. YOU, THOUGH, ARE SOLID AS WELL--AND **RESISTED** THE SEQUIDS ATTEMPTS--YOUR SKIN COULD NOT BE PUNCTURED BY THEIR TENDRILS.

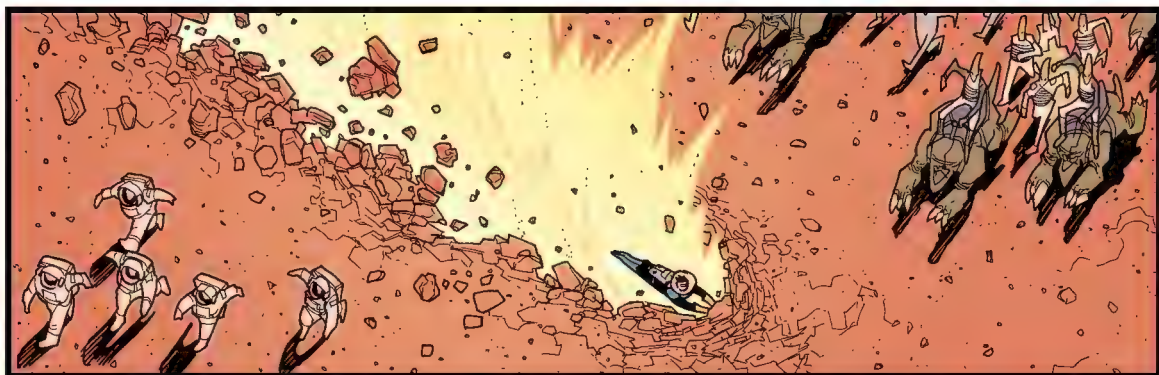
HOW IS THIS? HOW IS IT YOU WERE ABLE TO RESIST THEM?



RUN!
RUN AS
FAST
AS YOU
CAN!!

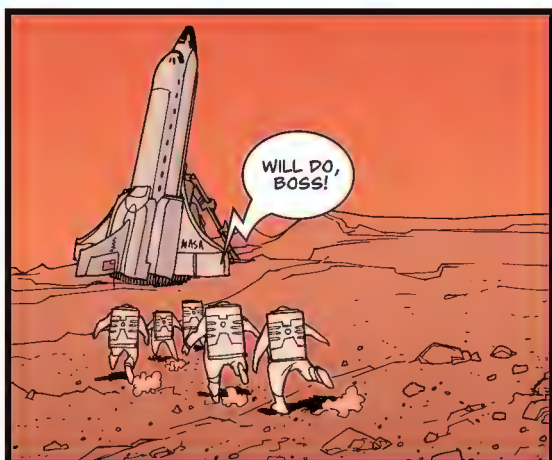
I'LL
HOLD
THEM
OFF!!





WHOA!
WHO IS
THAT
GUY?!

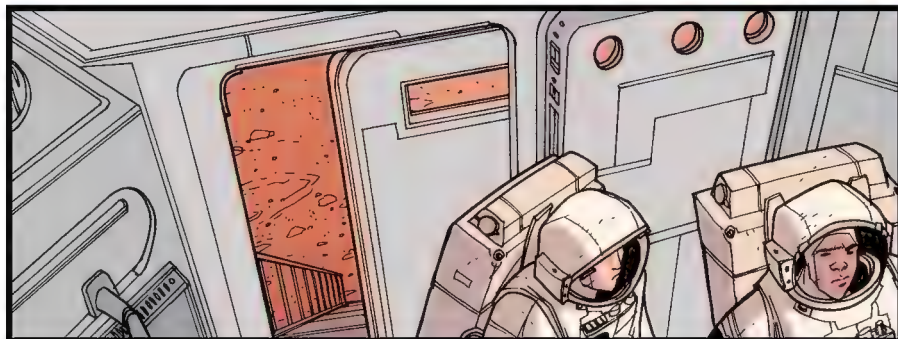
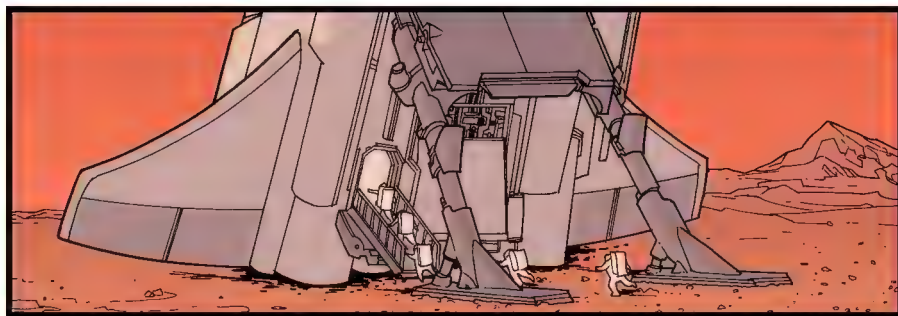
WHO
CARES! HE'S
OUR TICKET HOME!
JUST KEEP
RUNNING!



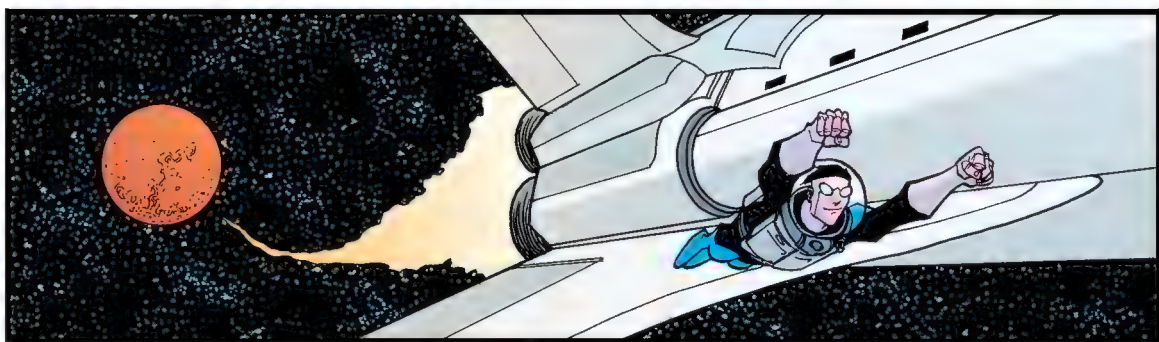
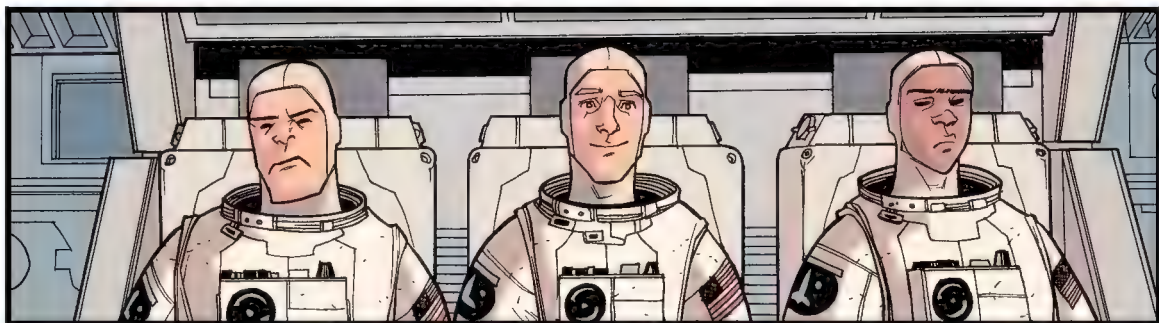
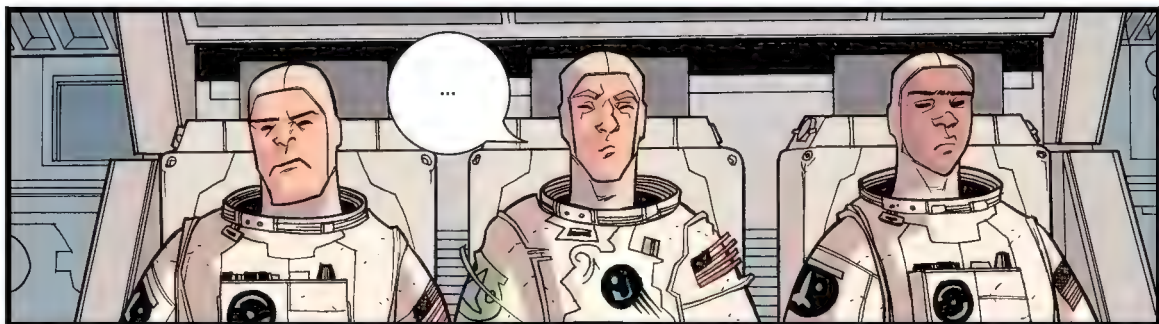
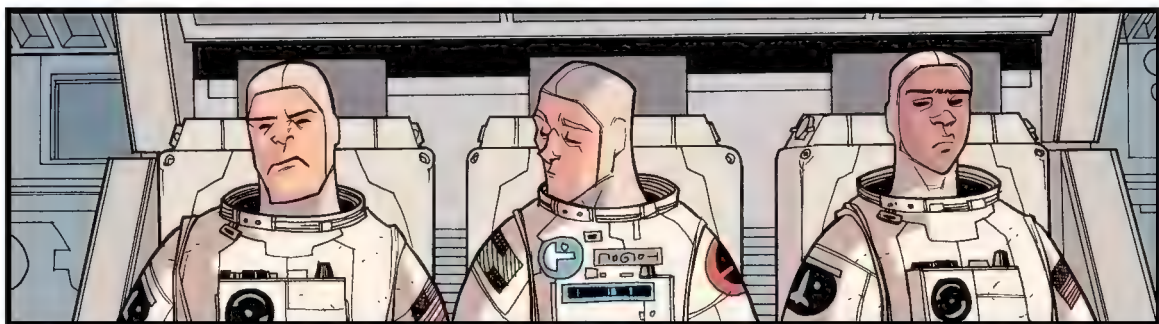
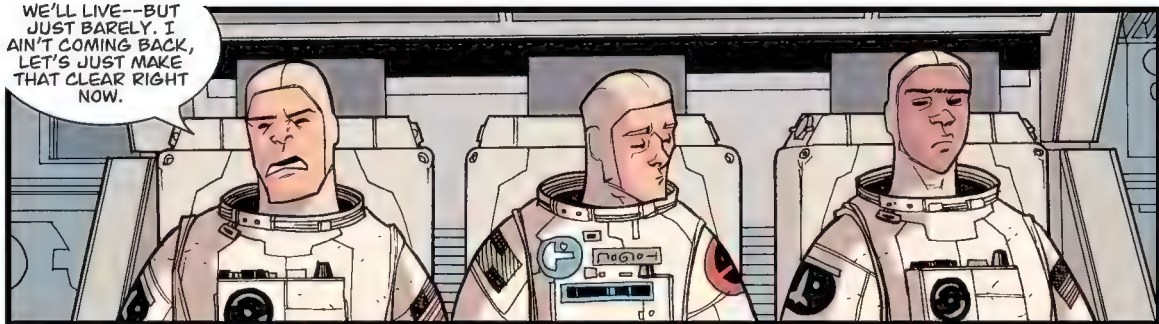
WILL DO,
BOSS!

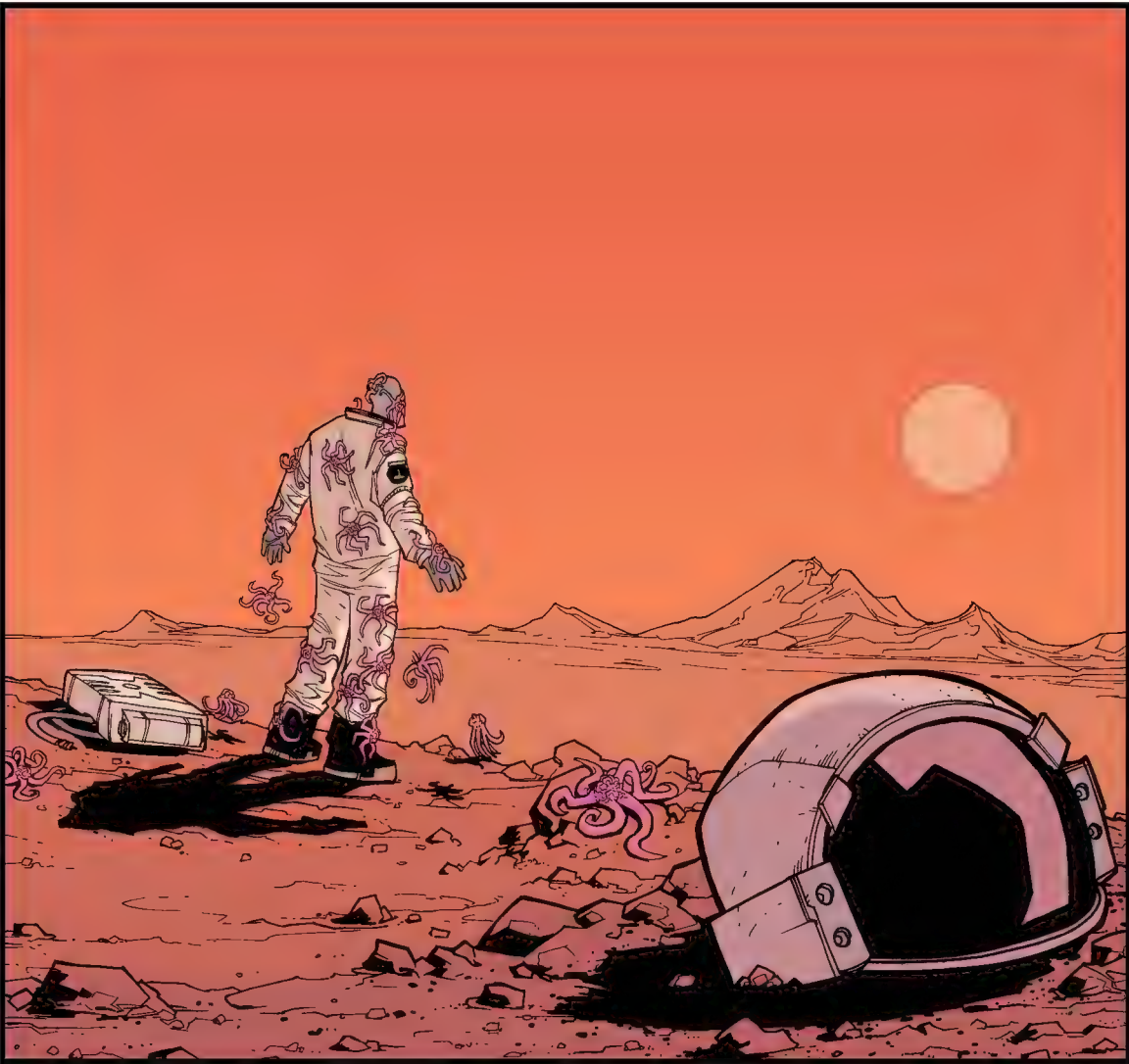


JUST
A--LITTLE--
MORE
TIME!



WE'LL LIVE--BUT
JUST BARELY. I
AIN'T COMING BACK,
LET'S JUST MAKE
THAT CLEAR RIGHT
NOW.



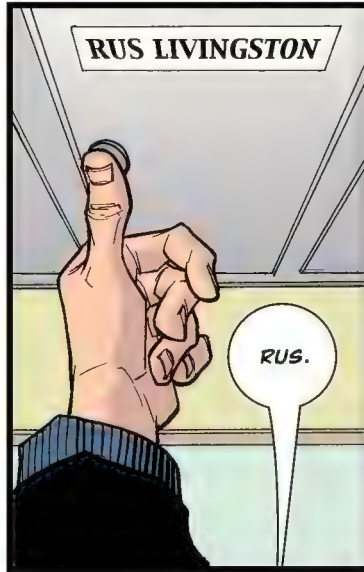
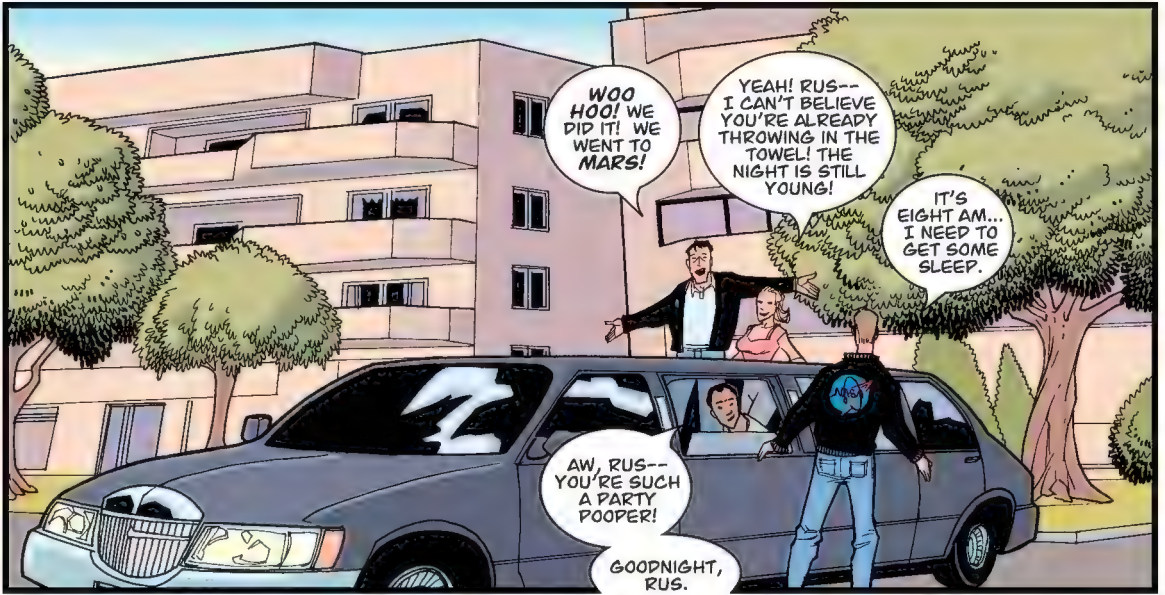


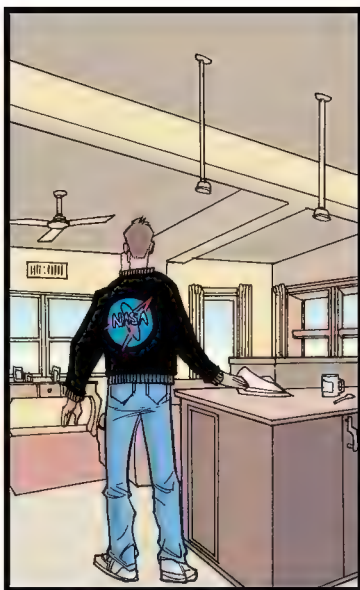


CHAPTER SEVEN



WY9

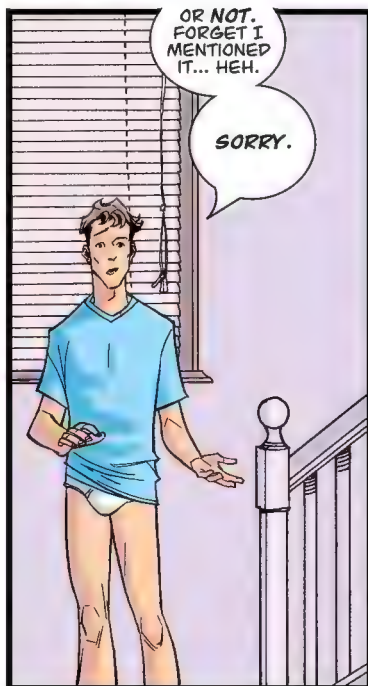
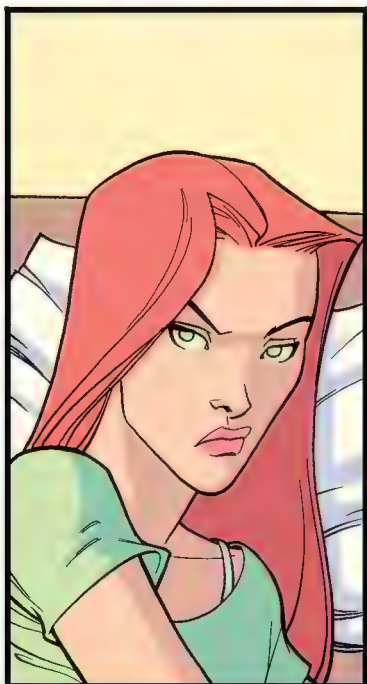
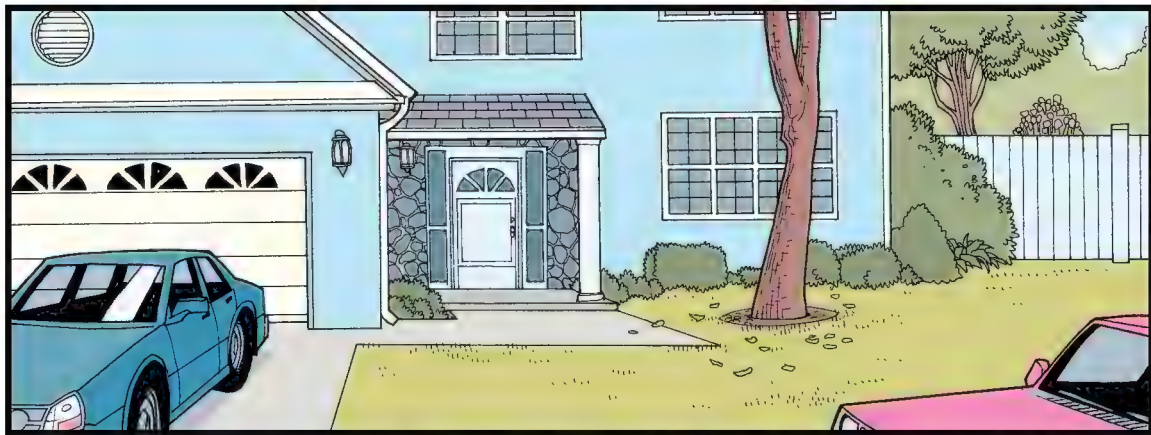


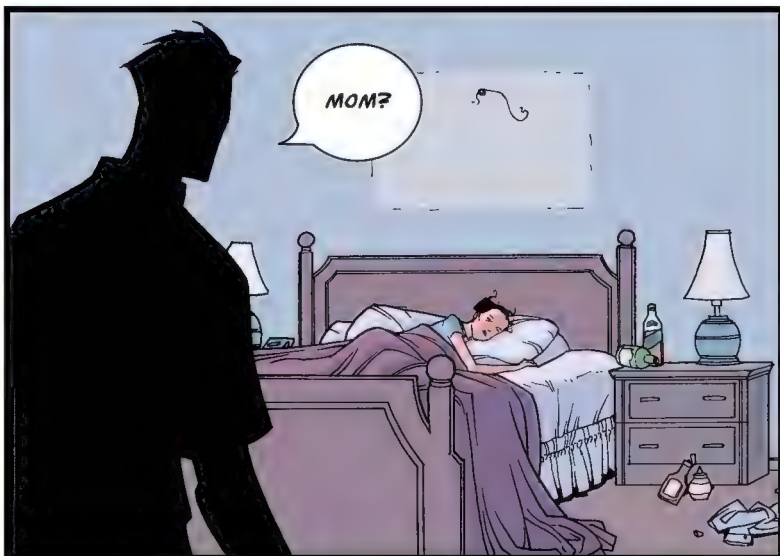
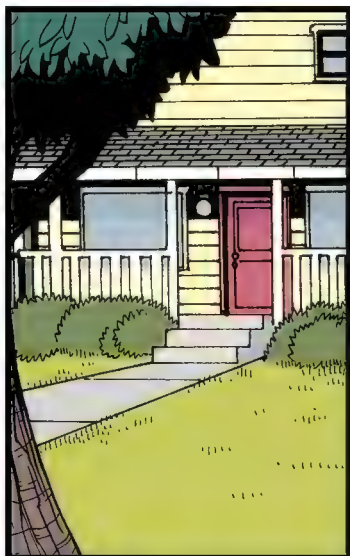


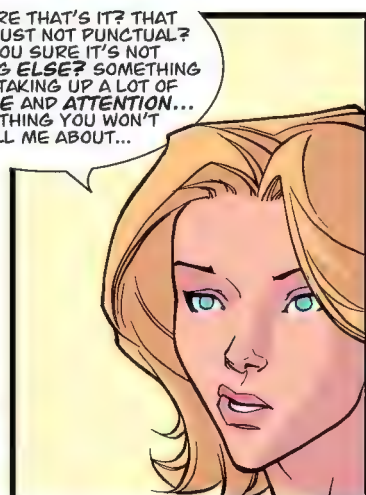
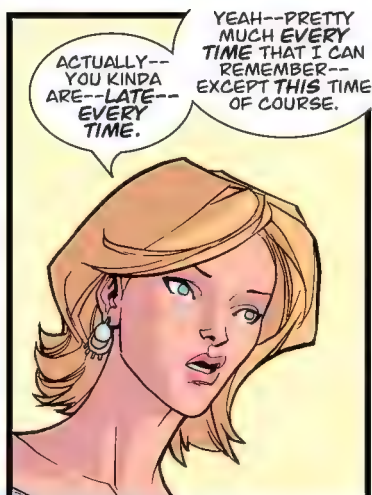
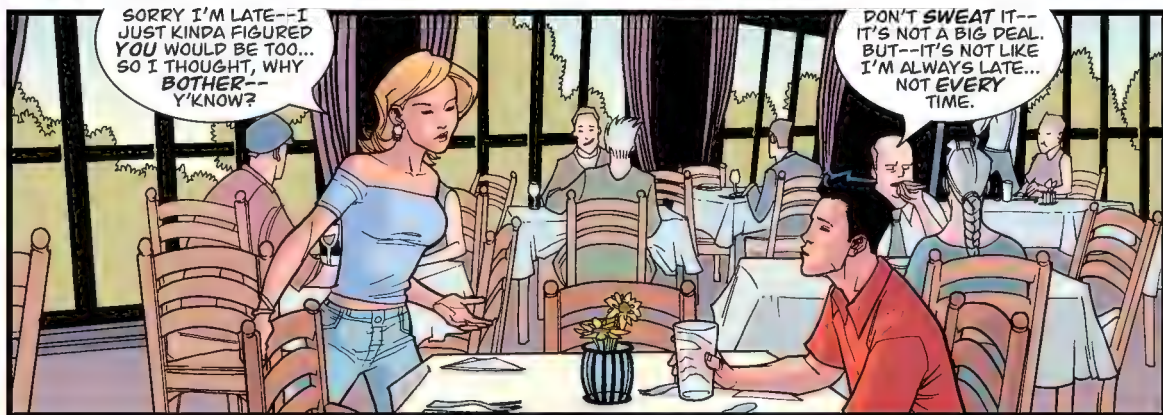
⇒WHEW!⇐

FINALLY...

I DON'T
THINK I
COULD'VE HELP
THAT SHAPE
ANOTHER
MINUTE.









WE DON'T KNOW *WHY* BUT HE'S DEMOLISHING SOME CONDEMNED BUILDINGS THAT WERE ALREADY SET FOR DEMOLITION. I THINK HE'S JUST TRYING TO GET SOMEONE'S *ATTENTION*. I FIGURED SINCE THIS WOULD ONLY BE A TWENTY-MINUTE JOB, TOPS, YOU WOULDN'T MIND HELPING ME OUT SO *SOON* AFTER RETURNING FROM *MARS*.

IT'S NOT A BIG DEAL-- BUT I DON'T SEE HIM, WHERE DID YOU SAY HE WAS?



OH WAIT-- THERE YOU ARE.

OH, GOOD. I HAD HOPED IT'D BE YOU WHO SHOWED UP.

IF YOU SAY SO. ALTHOUGH, BY MY ACCOUNT I'VE KICKED YOUR BUTT *TWICE* ALREADY SO I DON'T SEE WHY YOU'D BE HAPPY TO SEE *ME*. WHATEVER-- LET'S GET STARTED.

TWICE?



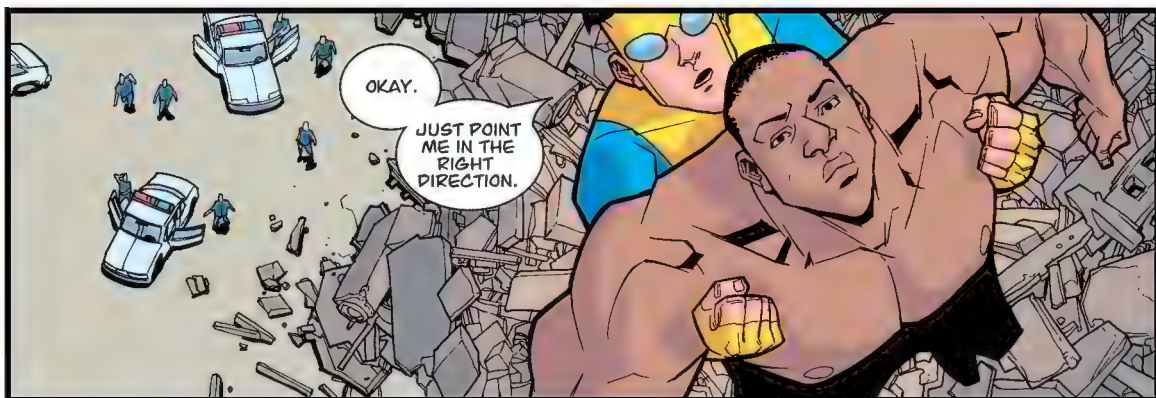
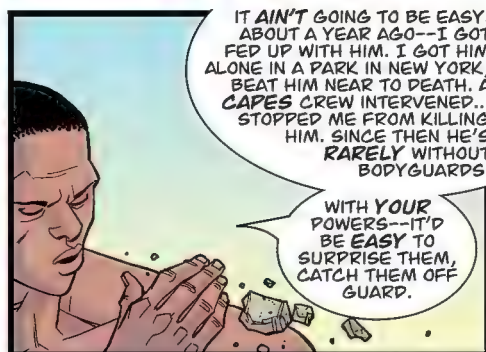
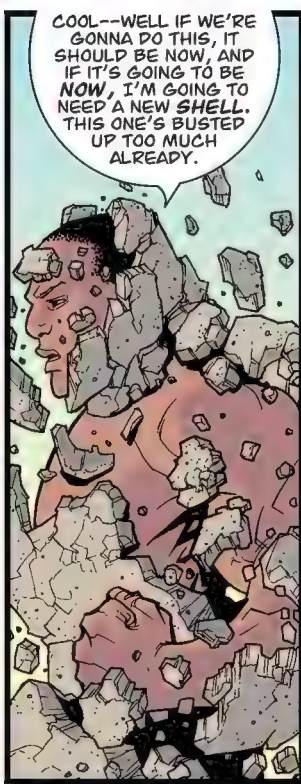
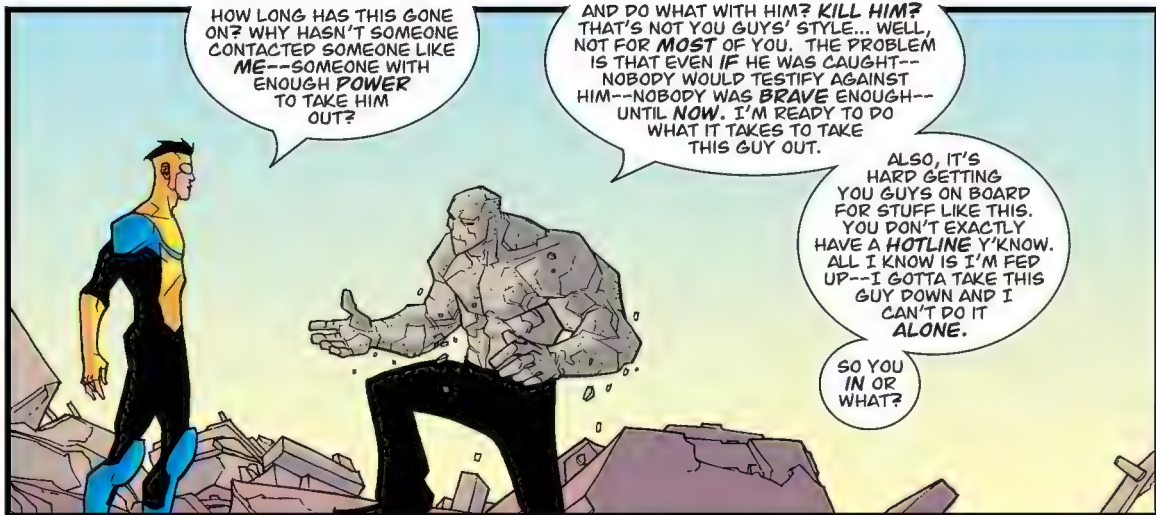
WHOA, WHOA, *WHOA*! I NEED YOUR HELP. I AIN'T HERE FOR A FIGHT. I NEED YOU TO HELP ME TAKE DOWN *MACHINE HEAD* ONCE AND FOR ALL.



WHO?



MACHINE HEAD... HE'S THE TOP CRIME BOSS IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. NOT MUCH HAPPENS WITHOUT *HIS* SAY SO. POLICE CAN'T *TOUCH* HIM. HE'S GOT TOO MUCH FIREPOWER--AND MANPOWER. HE JUST SITS IN THERE DOING WHATEVER HE PLEASES. MURDER, DRUGS, *EVERYTHING*... HE DOES IT ALL.

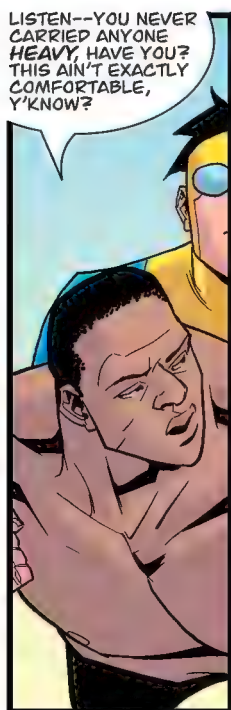




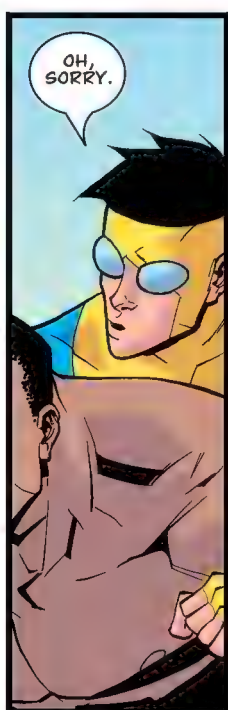
SO, WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO AFTER THIS? YOU COULD MAKE MONEY WORKING FOR THE GUARDIANS OF THE GLOBE.

YOU MEAN **GO STRAIGHT**? YOU DON'T REALLY GET IT, DO YOU? YOU GUYS RISK YOUR LIVES FOR **NOTHING**... IT'S DANGEROUS. **EVERY ONE** OF YOUR VILLAINS IS OUT TO **KILL YOU**. AS LONG AS WE DON'T GET TOO WRAPPED UP IN REVENGE, AND START WASTING OUR TIME GOING AFTER YOU GUYS... OUR LIVES ARE CAREFREE.

THE GUARDIANS ARE A FINE GIG, BUT I DOUBT THEY'RE LOOKING TO HIRE SOMEONE LIKE **ME**... BESIDES, THEY REALLY **EARN** THAT MONEY, YOU KNOW WHAT I'M SAYIN'?



LISTEN--YOU NEVER CARRIED ANYONE **HEAVY**, HAVE YOU? THIS AIN'T EXACTLY COMFORTABLE, Y'KNOW?



OH, SORRY.



THIS BETTER?

UH... YEAH. I GUESS.

ANYWAY. WE JUST **STEAL** STUFF, TEAR STUFF UP, AND HAVE A GOOD TIME. EVERY TIME ONE OF YOU HEROES COMES AFTER US, WE KNOW YOU'RE NOT TRYING TO KILL US. THE VILLAIN SIDE OF THIS IS **RISK FREE**, UNTIL THEY START BUILDING BETTER PRISONS, THAT IS... BUT NO MATTER HOW TOUGH THEY MAKE THOSE THINGS THEY'LL **NEVER** WORK. YOU PUT THAT MANY SUPER-POWERED VILLAINS IN ONE PLACE AND I GUARANTEE YOU-- **SOMETHING** WILL GO WRONG.

THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS IS FOR **RUBES**, MY FRIEND. IT'S A **FOOL'S** GAME. YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING WORKING **AGAINST** YOU.

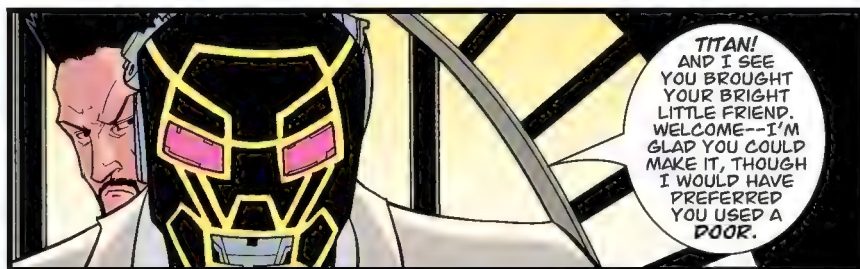
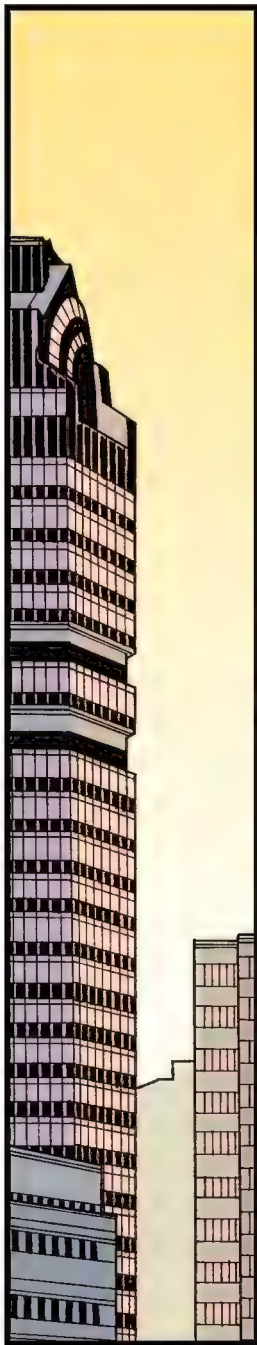
THANKS, BUT **NO** THANKS.

OF COURSE... AFTER TODAY-- I PROBABLY WON'T HAVE TOO MANY FRIENDS ON THE OTHER SIDE. SO WHO KNOWS...



OH, AND ABOUT YOU CARRYING ME LIKE THIS... THIS IS **SO**--

DON'T SAY IT. I KNOW.

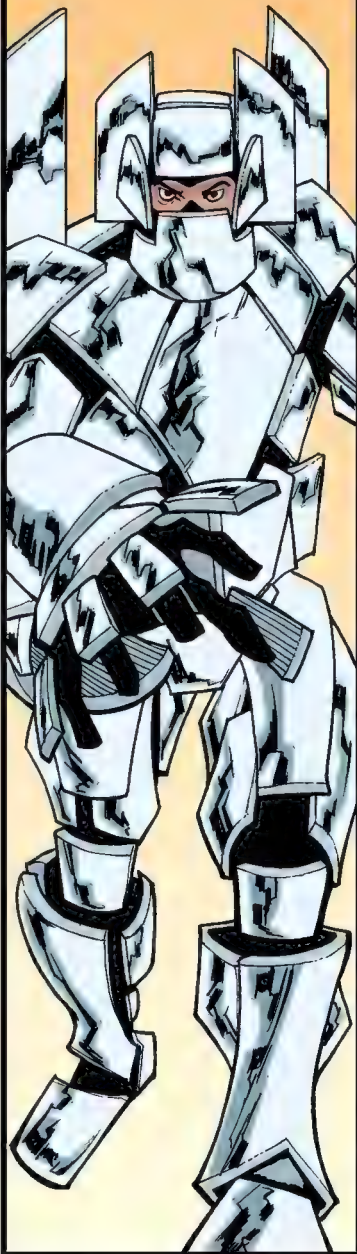
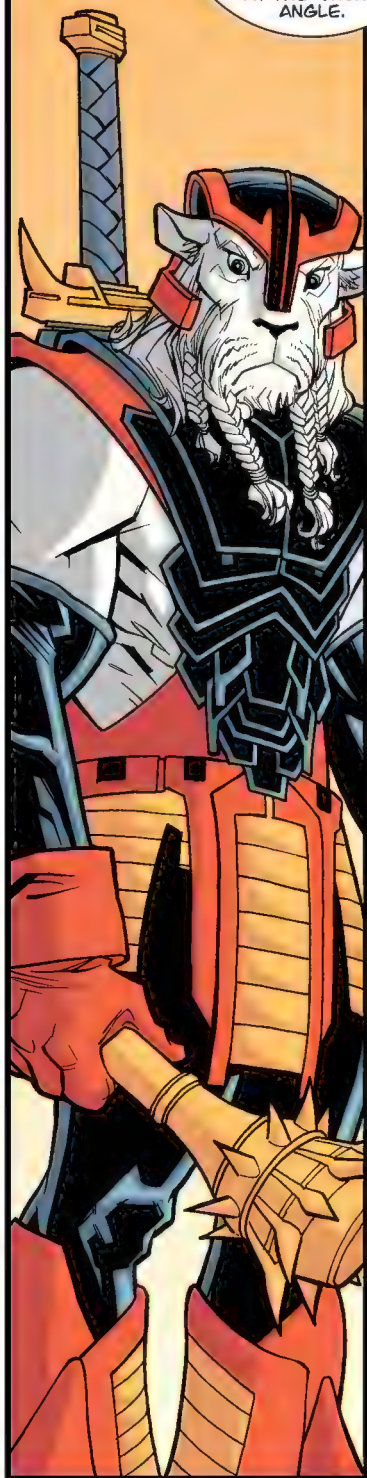


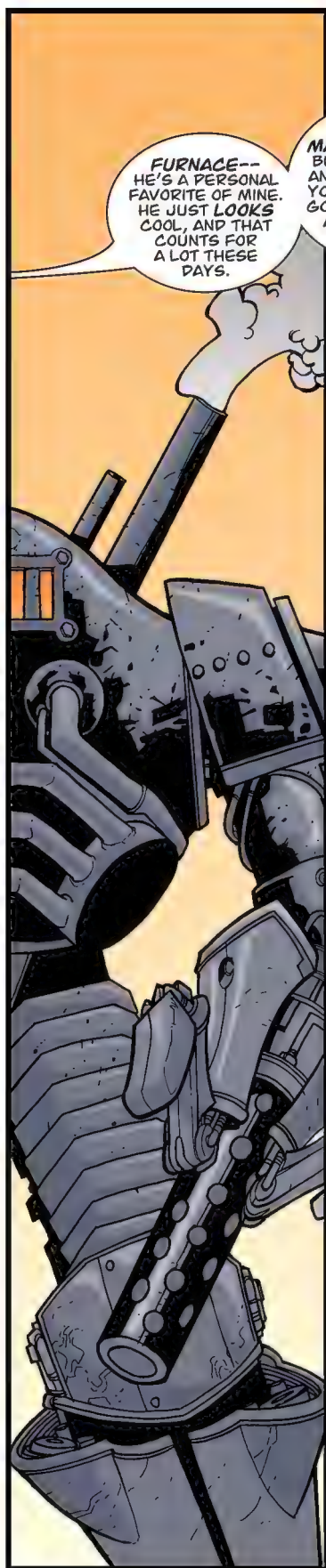
ALLOW
ME TO
INTRODUCE
YOU.

FIRST UP IS
BATTLE BEAST--
SCOURGE OF TWIN
GALAXIES, WHATEVER
THAT MEANS. HE LIKES
TO TAKE TROPHIES SO
MAKE SURE YOUR NECK
DOESN'T MEET ONE
OF HIS WEAPONS
AT THE WRONG
ANGLE.

NEXT UP IS
MAGNATTACK.
YOU'LL FIND OUT
HIS POWERS SOON
ENOUGH. I DON'T
WANT TO RUIN THE
SURPRISE.

THEN,
STRAIGHT FROM
RUSSIA COMES
KURSK. HE'S GOT
SOME KIND OF
ELECTRICITY POWERS.
I'M NOT CLEAR ON
THE SPECIFICS... HE'S
DEADLY, AND THAT'S
REALLY ALL THAT
MATTERS.





FURNACE--
HE'S A PERSONAL
FAVORITE OF MINE.
HE JUST LOOKS
COOL, AND THAT
COUNTS FOR
A LOT THESE
DAYS.

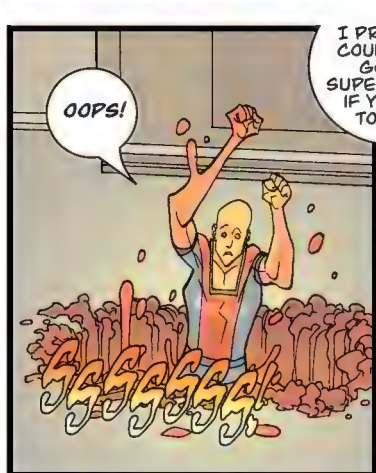
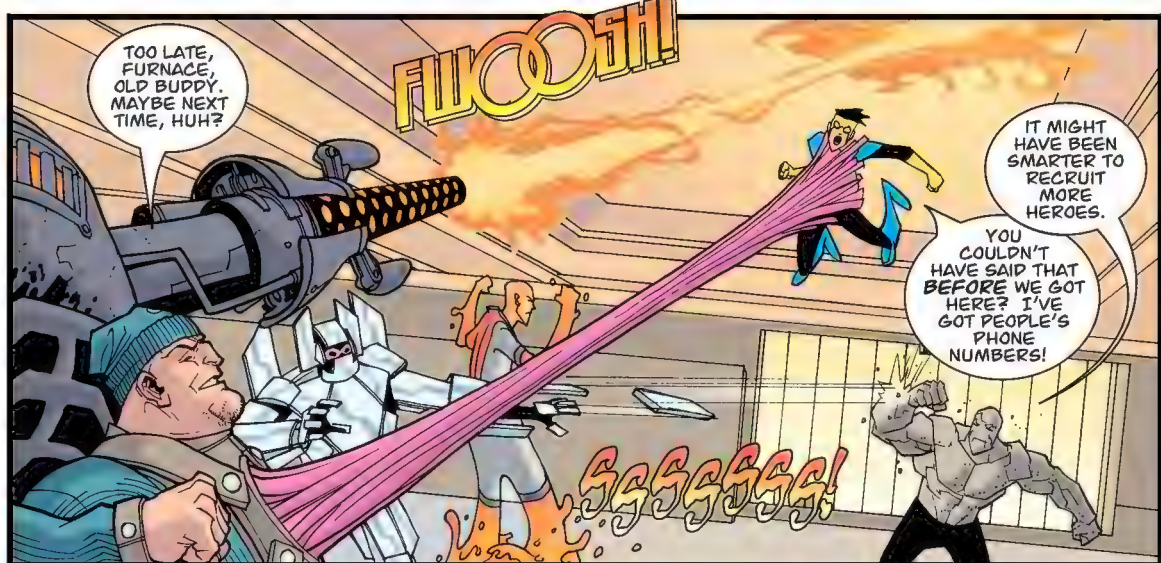
THIS IS
MAGMANIAC.
BETWEEN HIM
AND FURNACE,
YOU GUYS ARE
GOING TO HAVE
A HOT TIME
TODAY.

HE'LL
CERTAINLY
PUT YOUR
NAMESAKE
TO THE TEST,
INVINCIBLE.

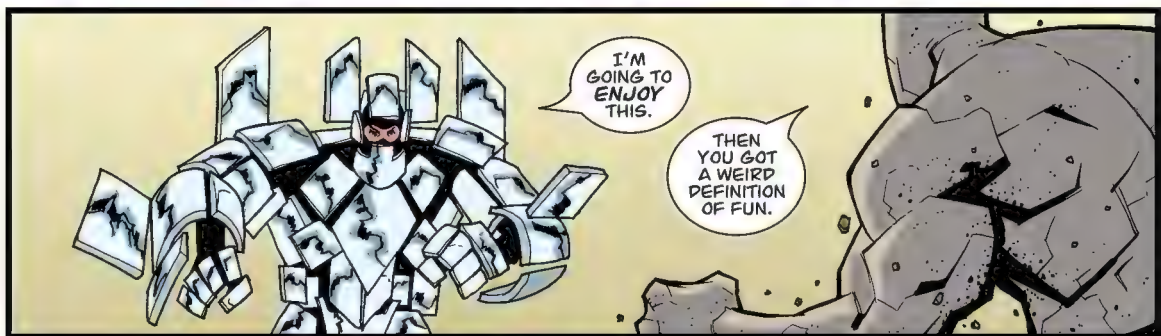
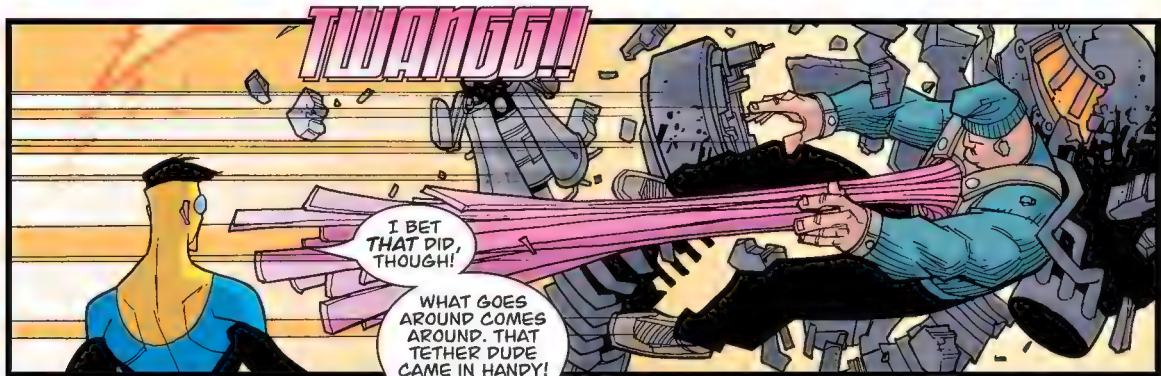
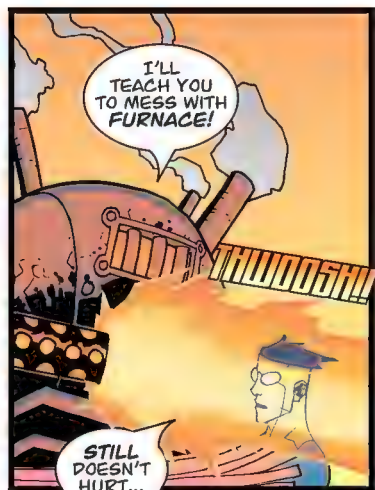
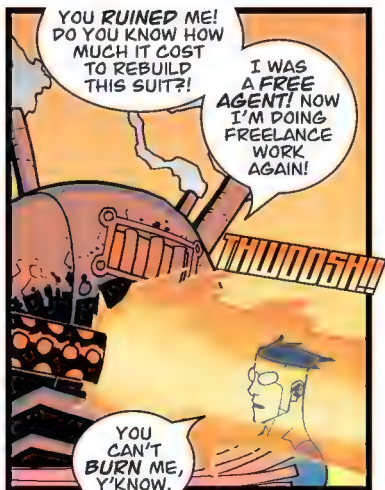
AND
LASTLY--THE
TETHER TYRANT.
NOT SURE EXACTLY
WHAT IT IS THAT
HE DOES... BUT
HE DOES IT
WELL.

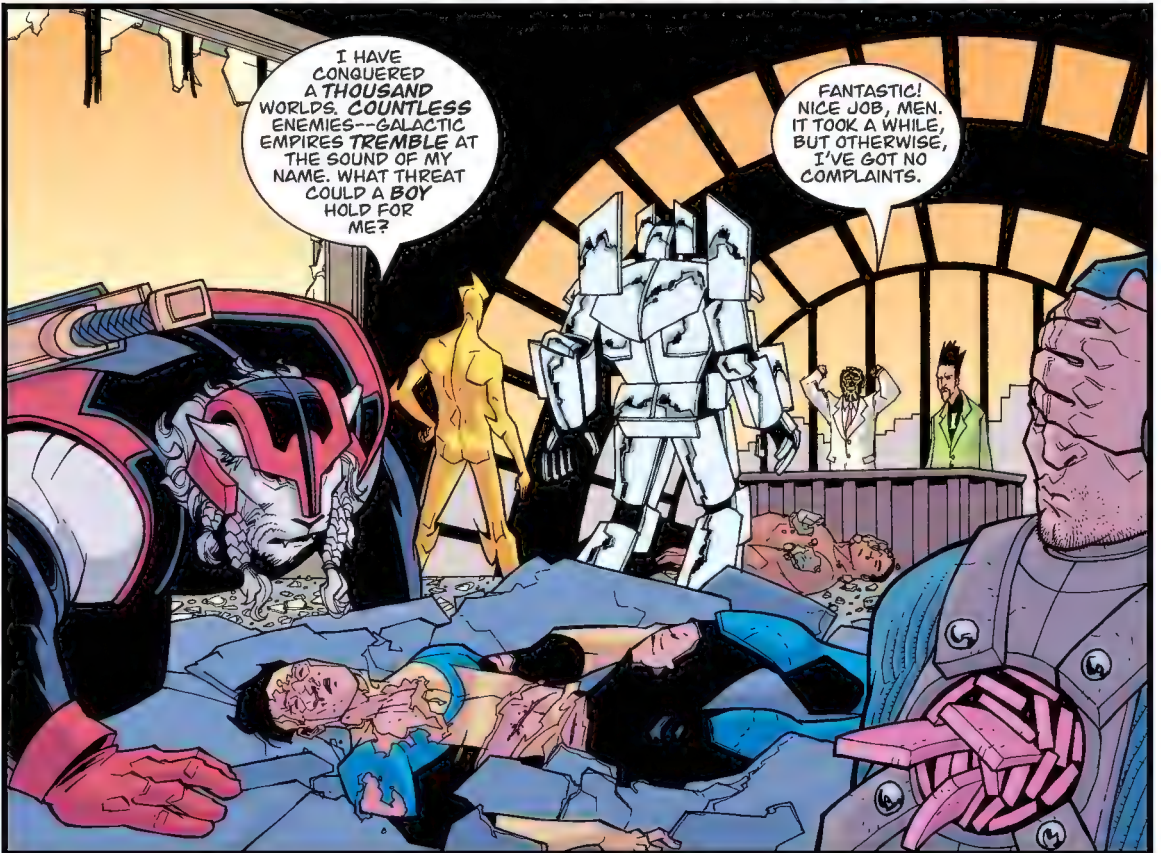
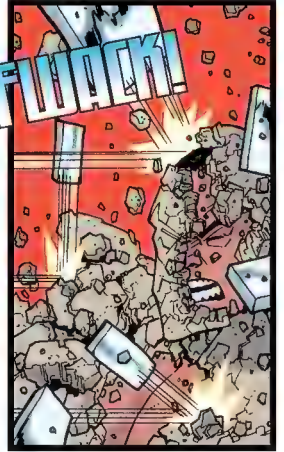
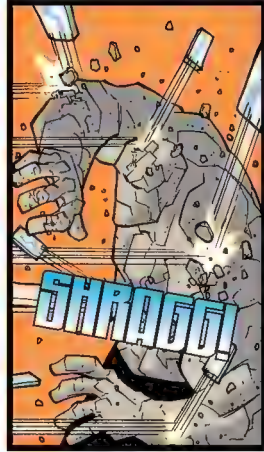
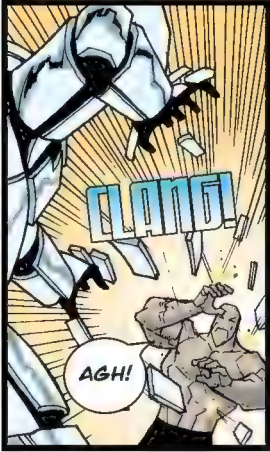
PLAY
NICE, NOW.
I'VE ALREADY
GOT A
WINDOW
TO FIX.













SCRATCH
THAT LAST
PART.

TAKE
THEM OUT--
NOW! WE'VE
GOT TO GET
OUR PEOPLE
OUT OF
HERE!

OH,
NO!



ISOTOPE--
GET ME OUT
OF HERE.



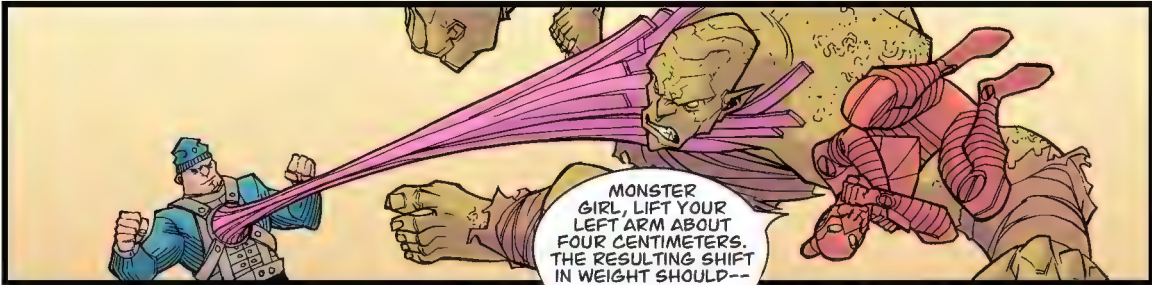
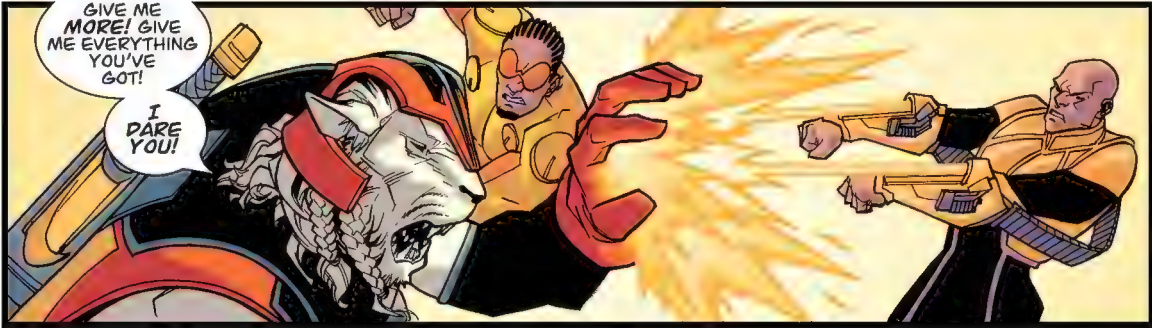
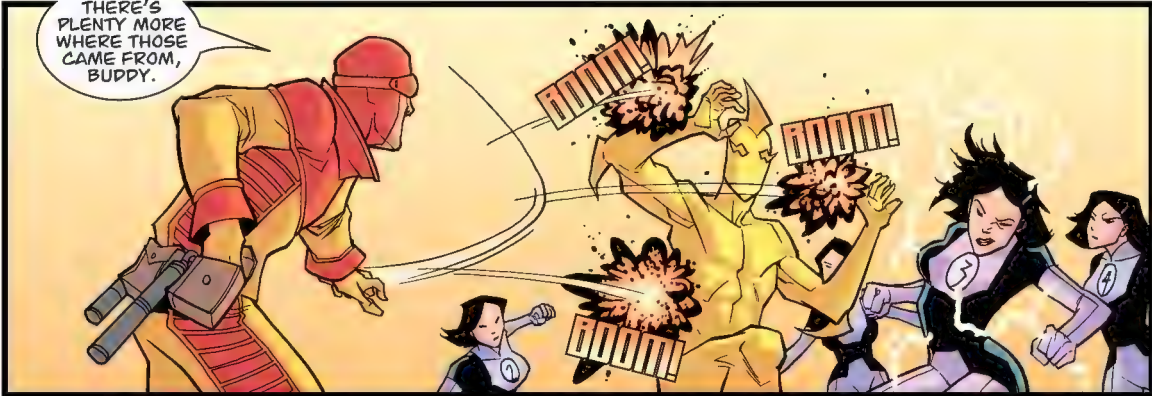
ISOTOPE?

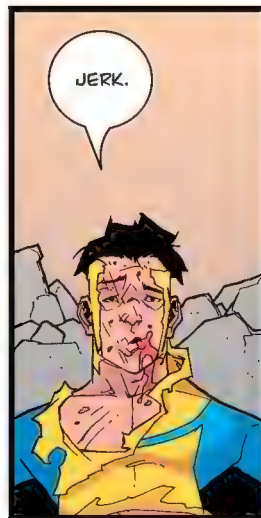


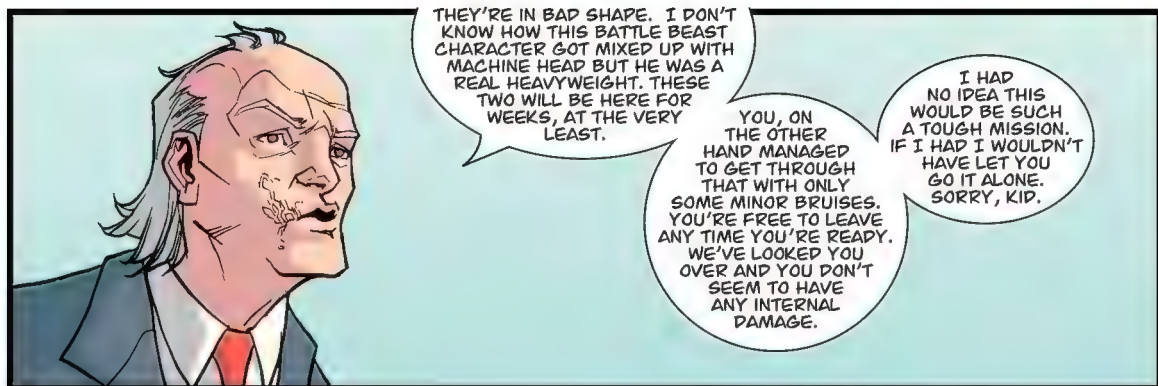
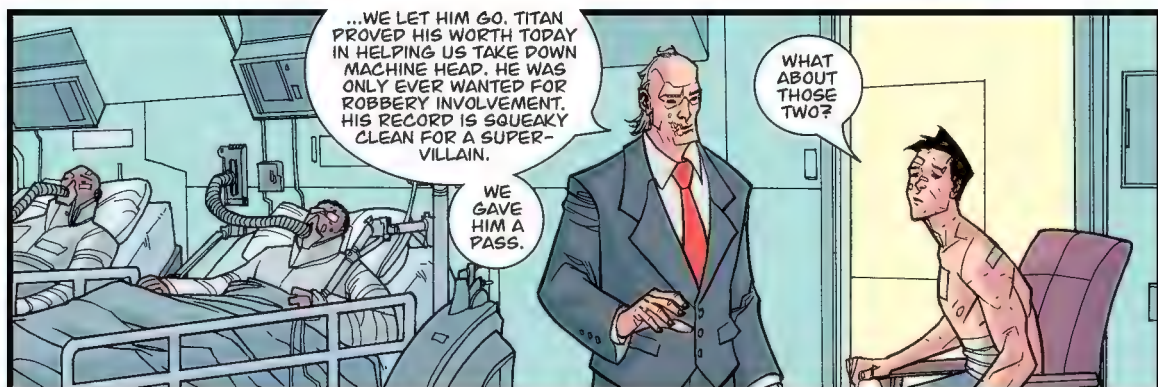
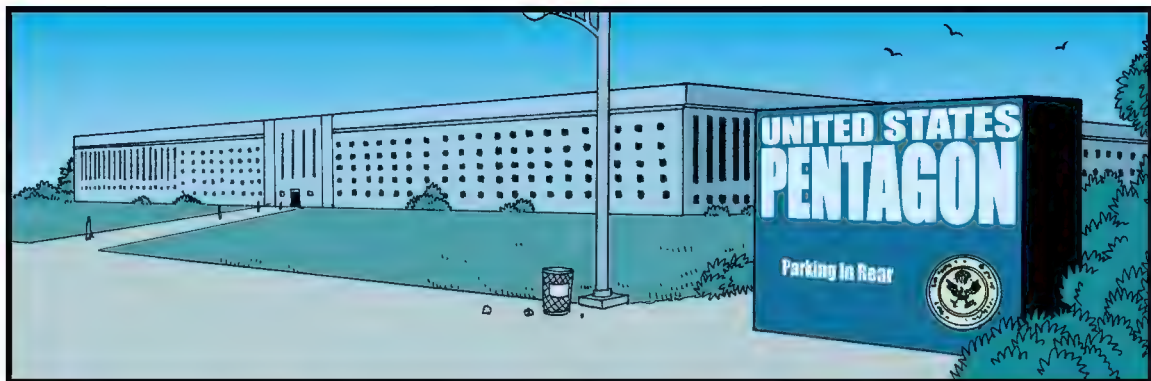
THE
GUARDIANS
OF THE GLOBE?
BUT HOW DID
YOU--?

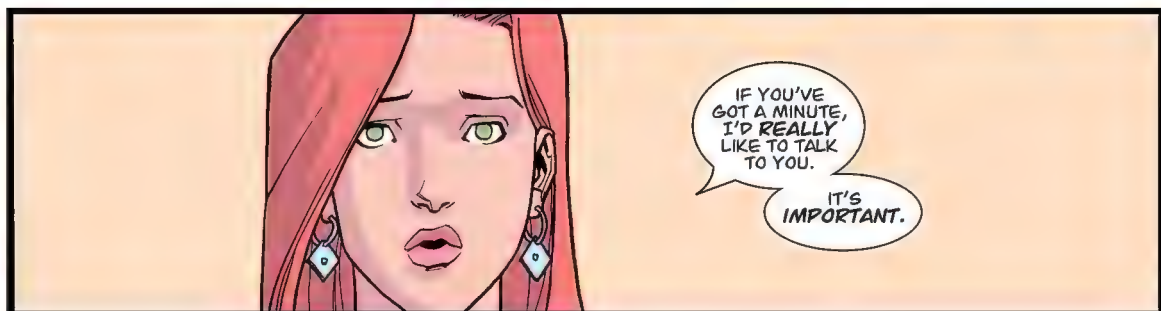
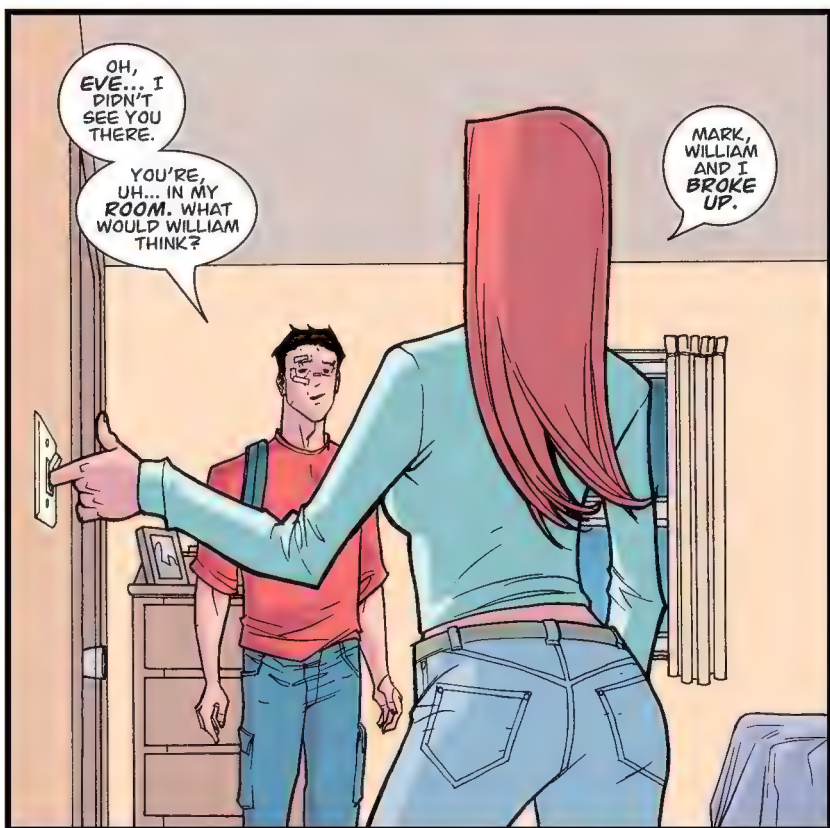
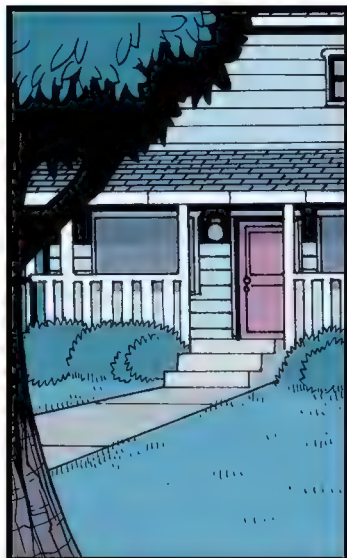
CECIL WAS
LISTENING IN.
HE SENT US
TO HELP.

YOU
JUST SIT
TIGHT, YOUNG
MAN. WE'LL
TAKE THE
FIGHT FROM
HERE.











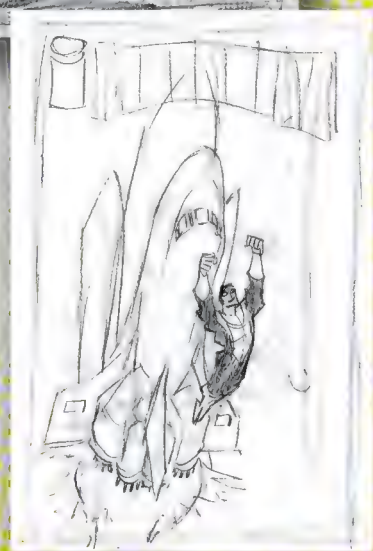
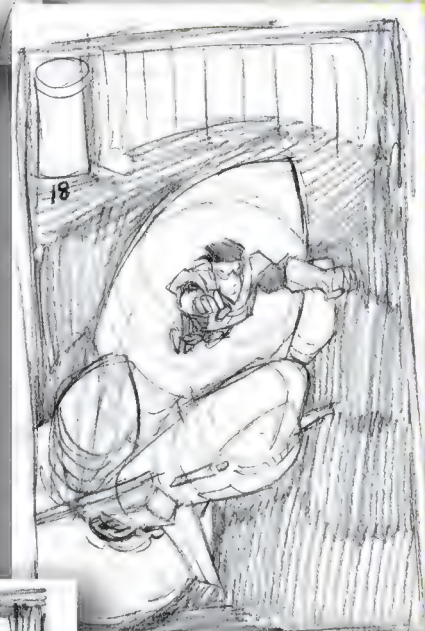


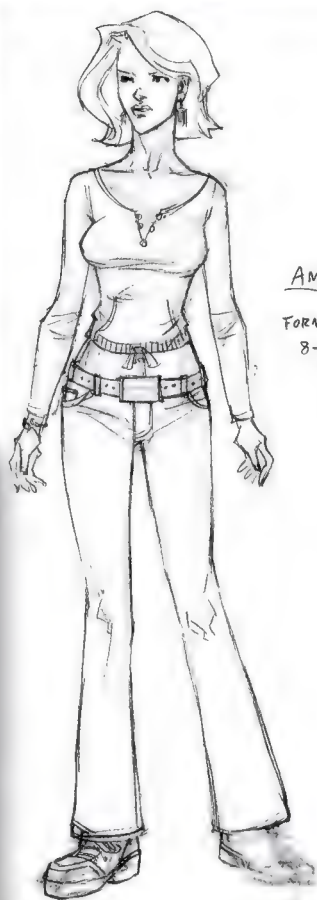
YES...

YES
THEY
WILL.



After a brief stint as cover artist on issue 13, followed by a series of guest covers, including ones by Frank Cho, Mike Wieringo, and a couple more Cory Walker greets, Ryan Ottley took over as regular cover artist with issue 18. On this page you should see his sketches for the covers to 18, 19, and 20 (which should be in the next TPB but it's drawn on the same page as the issue 19 sketch). I think Ryan's done a bang up job on his covers. He even set us up with a sweet cover for this volume on the first try, and a quick look back at the sketchbook sections for volumes 1-3 will reveal that this is the first time that's happened.





AMBER
FORMER
8-YEAR OLD
FROM THE '70s

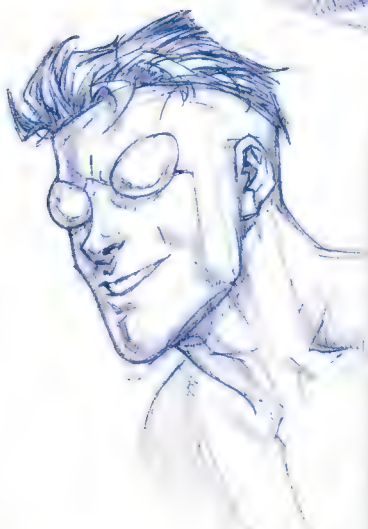


Some random sketches of stuff. It's always nice to see Allen the alien. He's one of my favorites in the book. Also on this page, a new design for Amber. When Amber made her second appearance in issue 8 (her first was in issue 4, go look) I thought she looked a little off. I believe my exact words to Ryan were "She's dressed like an 8 year-old from the '70s." I know what you're thinking, and yes, I am horrible to work with, but you know what... Amber looks SO MUCH better now. So there.



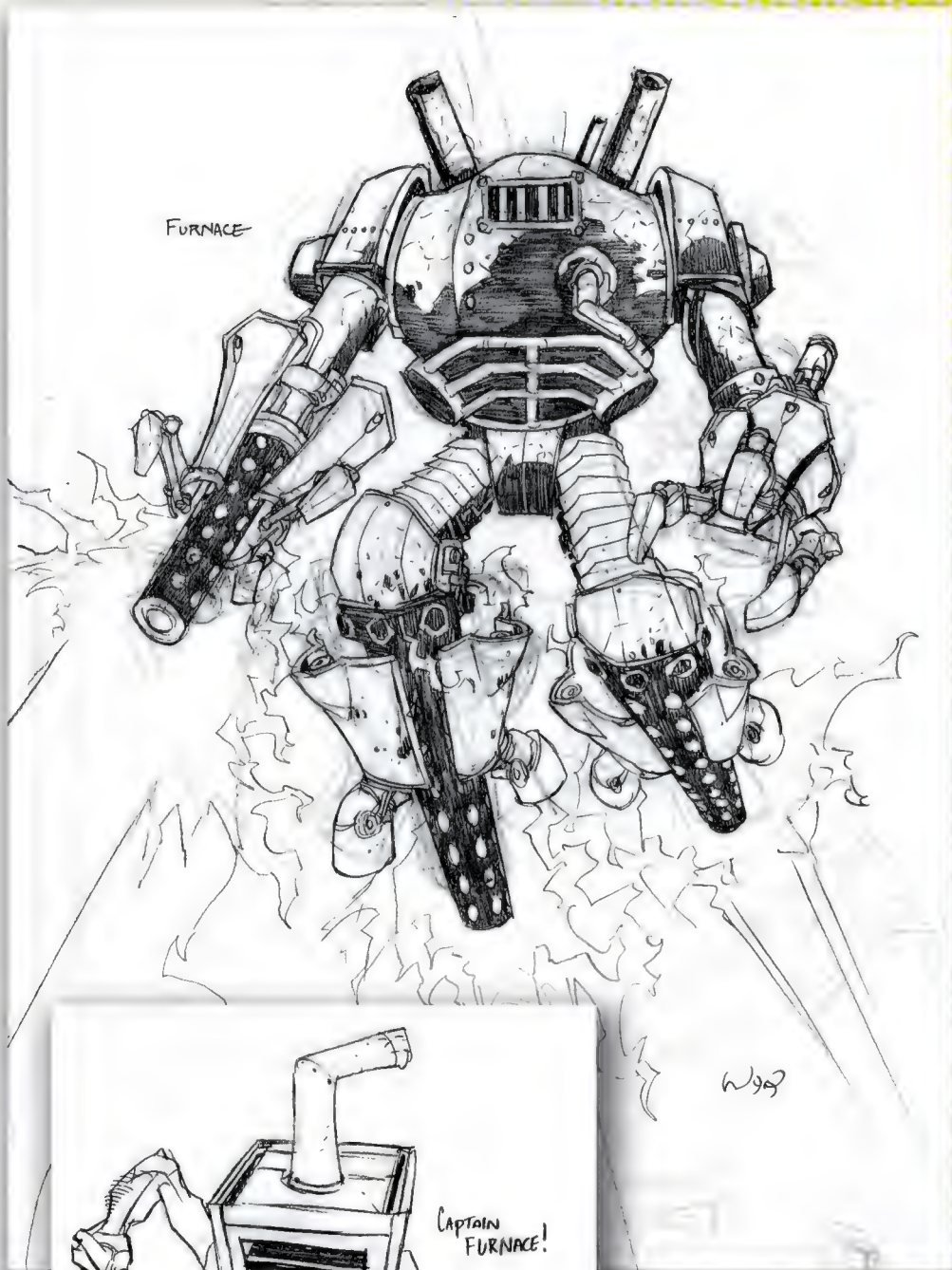
SHRINKING RAY

More random sketches. I think the hatched up Nolan and Mark looks pretty neat, a bit of a departure from how the book looks, and that's always fun. The brownish sketches of Invincible were done at the San Diego Comic-Con 2004. I think Ryan was trying out a new pen he was given. And the new Shrinking Ray costume. I had planned to introduce Shrinking Ray for a while (I'm pretty sure Cory came up with that name). When it came time for him to appear in issue 9, I whipped up a quick design for his costume that was very VERY loosely based on the classic Fantastic Four costumes (very LOOSELY). It looked horrible...it's not my finest moment. So when he reappeared in issue 14, I suggested to Ryan that he should design a new costume and what do you know, he made the character look GREAT!

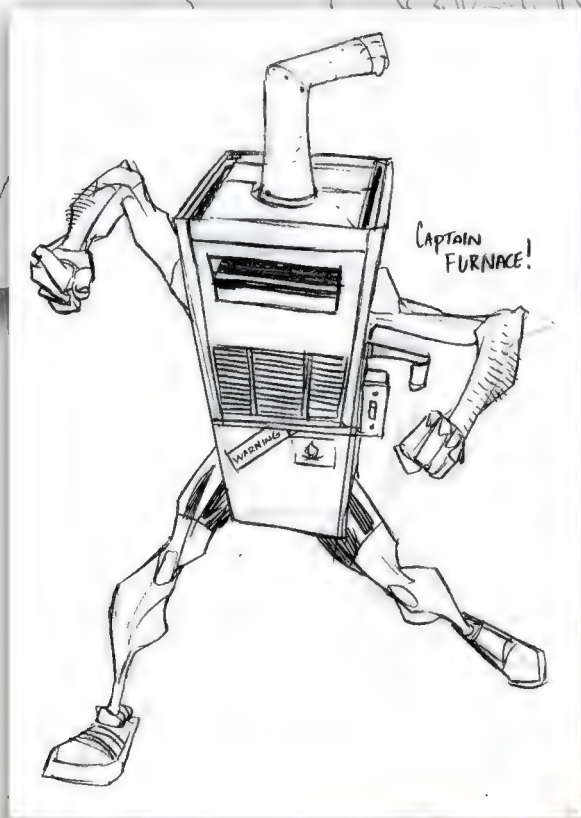




Issue 15 was a lot of fun. I had done a fairly goofy, and non-fish looking design for Aquarus for issue 7. Dave Johnson, design GOD that he is, took my crap and turned him into one of the coolest looking fish-guys around. Since then I knew I had to revisit that world we saw on one page in that issue. Having Ryan design new guys based on Aquarus' look was a real hoot. From sexy females to dopey guys, Ryan really knocked the ball out of the park. For that issue, I had established that Mark could hold his breath for a long time, but I wanted him to be able to talk and seem comfortable under water so I came up with some sort of mechanical gill thing that would go up his nose. That way we could see his mouth moving and it wouldn't obstruct his face in any way. I pictured it looking like two nose plugs, barely visible inside his nose, with a little bar connecting the two, like a discreet nose ring. Ryan said that would look stupid, and wanted to design a whole mask for him. I said, "if you're sure it'll look stupid, go ahead, but I want to see a sketch." In the sketch he wanted to MAKE SURE I realized the nose ring thing would look ridiculous, hence the little sketch there. Ryan is horrible to work with.



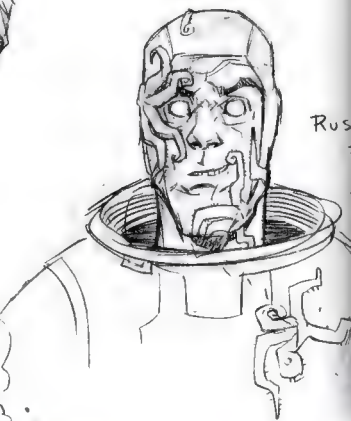
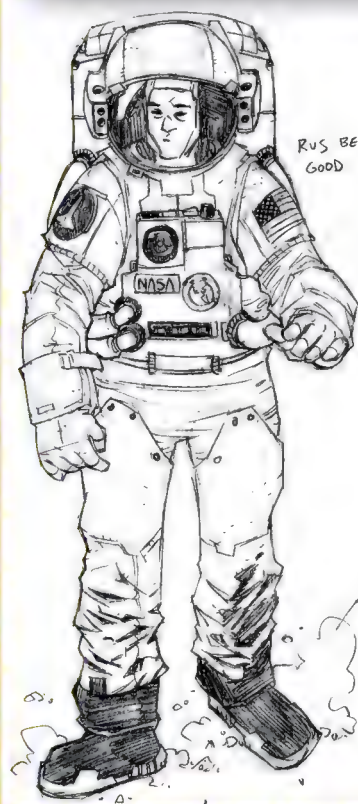
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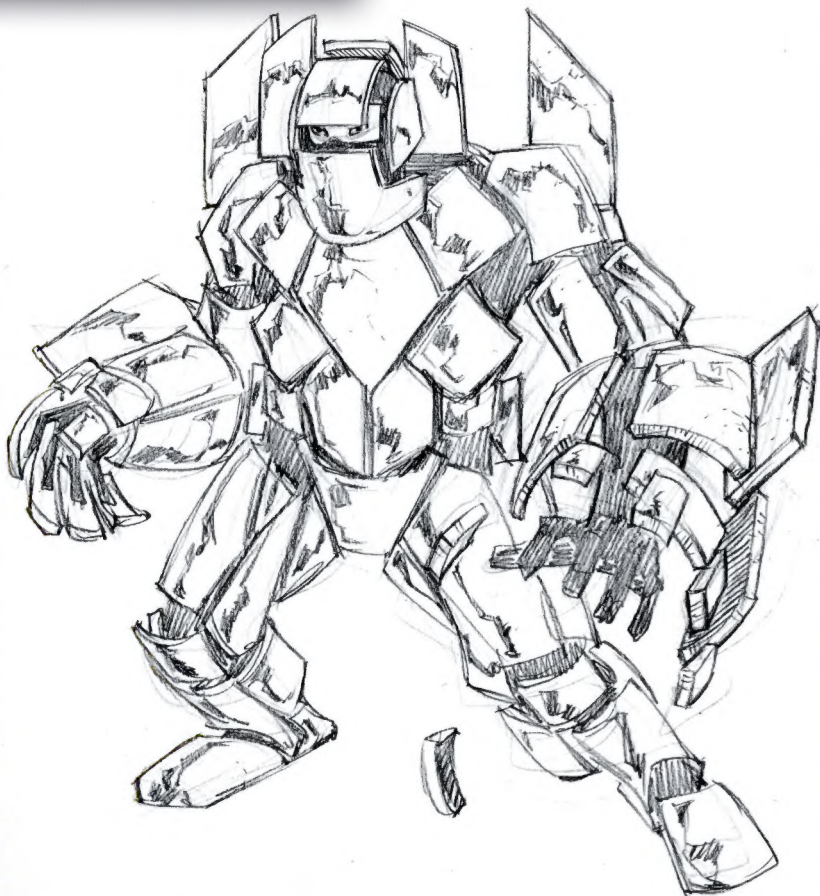
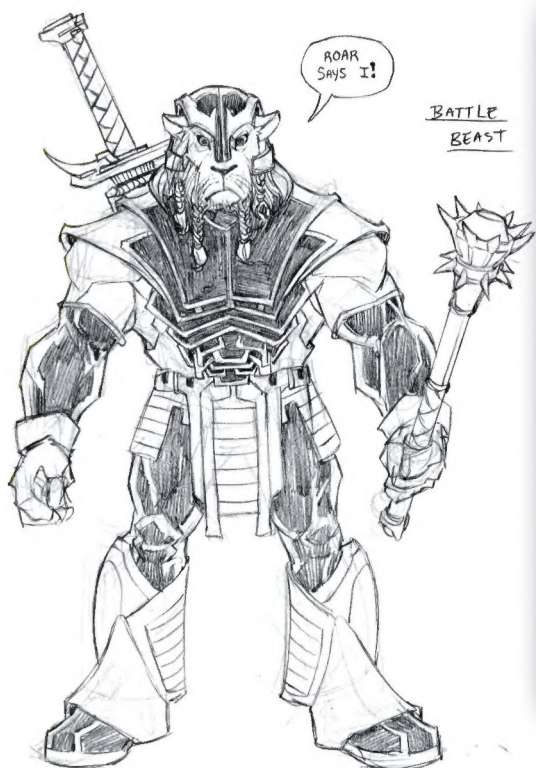
Ryan's design's for Furnace, the villain debuting in the Free Comic Book Day story and returning in issue 19. See the first one... see what I have to deal with? That's the kind of crap I have to put up with all the time!



I've got big plans for Mars, issue 18 is only the tip of the iceberg. I know it seems like I've got too much going on and not enough happening in this book, what with the seventy nine subplots currently going in the book, but hey... when stuff starts going down you people are going to be in heaven and all these issues will have been worth it, and then some. Ryan took Cliff Rathburn's design for Martian Man from issue 7 and really ran with it. Oh, and the guy on the next to last page of issue 18 is noticing his costume is **WRONG**, and he's **FIXING** it, because he's a shape-shifter stow away. Man did I hear about that one! Oh, and over on the next page you should see Ryan's original page 1 for issue 18. I like things about it, but those people in the foreground just didn't look at all scared that their apartment was caving in. So I had Ryan redraw it, because we're horrible to each other.







So sometimes I come to a revelation and it makes me do something drastic in the book. Like when I realized that Invincible doesn't have a very large rogues gallery... so I introduced four new villains in issue 19. Before I had been focusing on Mark and Nolan, preparing for the big reveal in issues 11 and 12. It didn't seem that important to have villains running around all over the place in the book. After that stuff was out of the way, I decided I'd make it a point to put in more bad guys... cool bad guys, guys that could actually hurt Invincible if they tried really hard. I think Magnattack is my favorite. Either him or the Tether Tyrant, who, despite popular belief, does NOT have a silly name.



Speaking of Tether Tyrant, here's Ryan's design for him and a really cool drawing Ryan did of him. This guy is just too cool. He's got BUBBLE GUM (or something) coming out of his chest. How can you not like THAT? Also on this page is Ryan's design for Isotope. He's a funny looking dude. I honestly have no idea how Ryan came up with his look... it's so, unique. We should be seeing more of this guy as time goes on. With that, I bring this sketchbook section to a close. Hope you enjoyed the ride, thanks for playing!

-Robert Kirkman

After the cataclysmic events of *Invincible: Volume 3*, Mark is left to pick up the pieces of his life. Everything is different now. His family, his friends, his colleagues. The world is very strange and unfamiliar to our young superhero. He is now faced with insurmountable odds, countless super-villains, other worldly threats, and graduating high school. Nobody told him being a superhero would be easy, but nobody told him it'd be this hard either.

Reprinting issues 14-19 of the Eisner Award nominated series, along with the story from the *Image Comics Summer Special*.

